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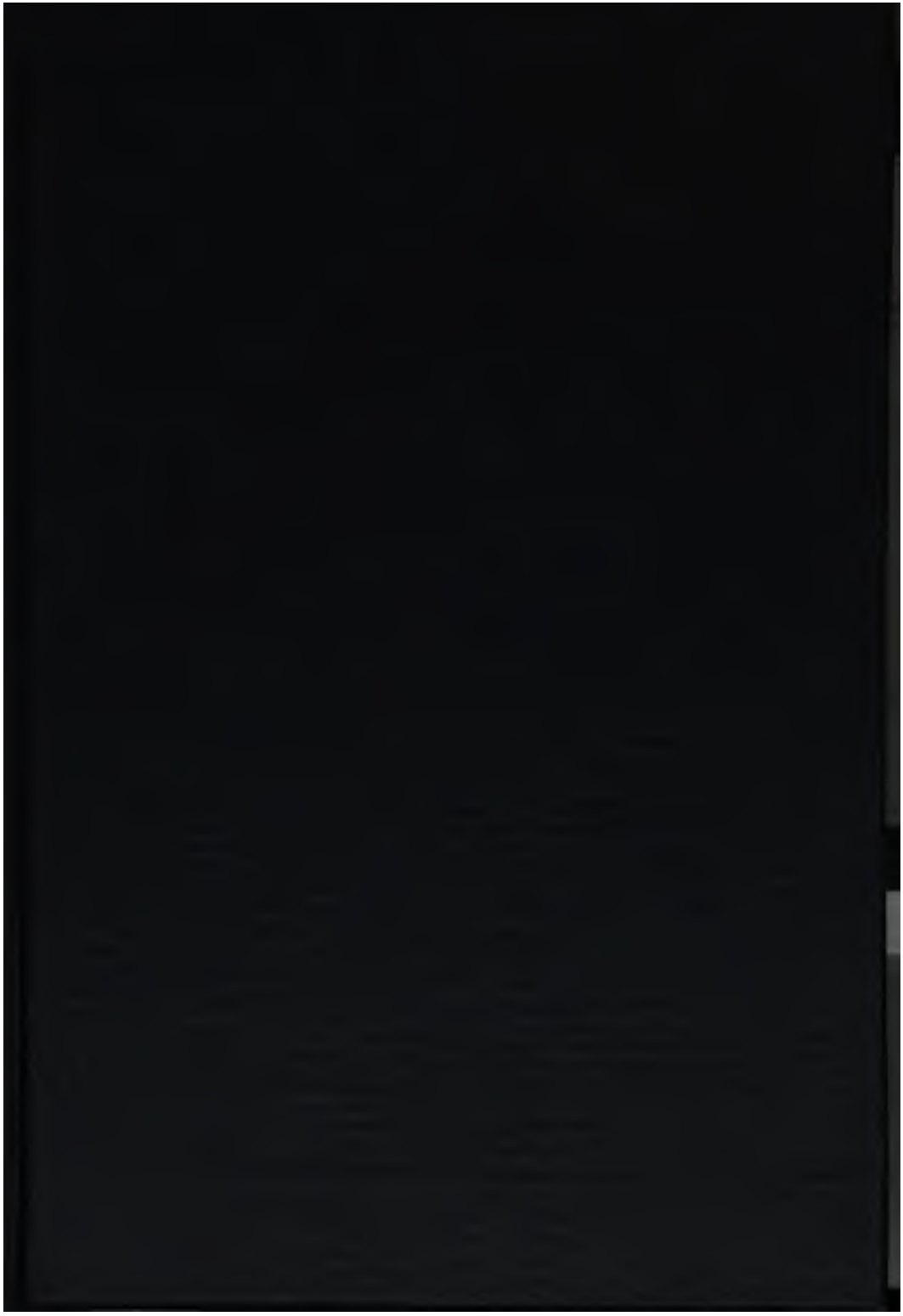

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MERRY-MOUNT;

A ROMANCE

OF

THE MASSACHUSETTS COLONY.

"O, if we could but see the shape of our dear mother England, as poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please, how would she appear, think ye, but in a mourning weed, with ashes upon her head, and tears abundantly flowing from her eyes, to behold so many of her children exposed at once, and thrust from things of direst necessity * * * * * * * * and to avoid insufferable grievances at home, enforced by heaps to forsake their native country." — MILTON.

VOLUME I.

BOSTON AND CAMBRIDGE:

JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

M DCCC XLIX.

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PREFACE.

THIS Romance was written some years ago, and was afterwards thrown aside, as on the whole not likely to interest the general reader. The subject was first suggested to me by a friend (far more capable of doing justice to it than myself), who had however entirely abandoned the ground. As, upon second thoughts, however, the epoch still seems to me to possess certain attractions, I submit, with great diffidence, the following pages to the public.

The crepuscular period which immediately preceded the rise of the Massachusetts Colony, possesses more of the elements of romance than any subsequent epoch. After the arrival of Winthrop with the charter, the history of the province is as clear as day-light; but during the few previous years there are several characters flitting like phantoms through the chronicles of the time, about whose life and personal adventures, either at home or in the wilderness, but little is known. They differ entirely from the group of personages who succeeded them. Their appearance is in striking, wilful contrast to the general aspect of the place and the age. For the purposes of history, perhaps it is of no great consequence that the strict account of their lives has not been written, but the singularity of their appearance gives them a certain romantic interest. It

Near a jutting promontory, within a deep indentation of the coast stood at that day a solitary cottage.

It was in a secluded cove, with the bay in front, the three-headed hill of Shawmut in the distance, and the primeval forest stretching out, in unfathomable shade, behind and all around. On the right hand, the headland of the cove was continued far into the bay, by the long, rocky peninsula, which had already been baptized by the Puritans with the name of their faithful friend, Tisquantum; on the left, the forest retreated a few hundred yards, leaving an open glade between the pebbly beach and the wood crowned and rolling country beyond.

The cottage was simple and rude, but picturesque in its effects. It was built of logs, which still retained their dark and mossy bark. It covered a considerable extent of ground; the thatched roof was low browed, with steep gables at the end, and two or three windows were furnished with small diamond panes of glass, a luxury which was at that day by no means common even in England. Over the door, which opened on the outside with a wooden latch, stood a pair of moose antlers, and on the ends of the projecting rafters, under the eves, were suspended the feet of wolves, the tails of foxes, raccoons, and panthers, and other trophies of the chase. On the sward of wild grass around the house lay a heap of game which had recently been thrown there, — pied brant-geese, blue and green winged teal, two or three long-necked, long-billed cranes, with a rabble rout of plump, slate colored pigeons, lay promiscuously with striped bass, dappled sea trout and other fish. It was evident that, although the sporting season had nearly reached its termination, there was yet no danger of starvation.

A fowling piece and shot pouch lay in the neighborhood, accompanied, singularly enough, by a musical instrument resembling the modern guitar.

A fair faced youth, apparently of some eighteen or nineteen

years of age, sat by himself, near the closed door of the cottage, mending a fishing net, two or three of which lay stretched upon the beach to dry, while ever and anon he seemed to relapse into a profound reverie, singing to himself the while, in a low, musical, but rather melancholy tone.

The appearance of the youth was striking. A few raven locks escaped from a slouched hat of brown felt, around a face which was very fair, with small, regular features, and deep violet eyes. A loose, dark jerkin, buttoned to the throat, and confined around his slender waist with a gay colored shawl, with nether garments of the same sombre hue, completed his equipment. He seemed to be mechanically pursuing his task, interrupting his plaintive song occasionally to gaze with an air of abstraction upon the scene around him. It was a lovely solitude. That iced sirocco, the north-east wind, had paused, and the vast, skeleton trees showed throughout their leafless tracery the influence of the genial warmth. The red flowering maples blushed with blossoms, the birches were decked in their fragrant tassels, and even from the sullen giants of the forest, the white and black oaks, swung the small pendulous crimson flowers.

The youth looked wistfully out upon the ocean, when he was suddenly startled by the report of a gun. He sprang to his feet, threw down his net, and grasped eagerly the firearm which lay near him upon the ground. The clumsy musket of the period, almost always used with a rest, seemed altogether too unwieldy for the slender boy, but he handled it with adroitness, and his dark blue eye flashed in rapid glances to every side of the forest, and then out upon the bay, in quest of apprehended danger. The sound seemed to have proceeded from the deep thickets on the edge of the promontory of Tisquantum, and presently there was another report seeming to come from the island opposite, at that time the abode of the Scotchman, David Thompson, from whom it derives its name. The boy ran down

to the beach, and strained his eyes eagerly out upon the ocean. At last he saw very plainly the white sail of a small boat between the island and the main, approaching rapidly towards him. A dark object rose and fell upon the surface of the water some hundred yards in front of the skiff, and as they drew nearer the boy relaxed his grasp of the musket, and leaned leisurely upon it, while he contemplated the scene. A large moose was swimming gallantly for his life, still unwounded, but hotly pursued by the boat. It was obvious that the first shot which the youth had heard, had been fired from the thicket, and that the animal having been near the edge of the promontory, had taken to the water with the intention of gaining the opposite island. He had evidently been received, as he approached the shore, by another enemy, who had fired unsuccessfully, but caused him to relinquish his attempt at landing. He was now making directly for the cove, and was gaining perceptibly upon the boat, which contained four persons. It would have been easy for the lad, hidden as he was, to have destroyed him as he approached, but the gentle youth seemed to be no sportsman, and on the contrary, to be gazing with an intense interest upon the animal's struggles for life. The magnificent creature renewed his efforts, the crest of the waves broken already as the water grew shoaler, dashed in his large face and over his splendid antlers. Already he was close to the entrance of the cove. A few rapid bounds, and his foot would touch the beach. Nearer and nearer he struggled, when suddenly, with an inexplicable impulse, he doubled upon his pursuers. The cause was explained in a moment, as a second sail floated round the other headland. Still unhurt, but bewildered, he turned madly round, and dashed straight as an arrow at the first boat. The sportsman, calm as a clock, took aim at the animal's head. The deer dashed onward, rushing desperately upon his fate, when, instead of the expected report, a light click of the lock told that at the critical

moment the firearm, wet with spray, had hung its fire. The moose struggled slowly by, fairly worried and exhausted by the chase, while the boatmen threw a cord rapidly around his antlers, and in spite of his furious struggles at last captured him alive.

Both the little skiffs were now near the cove. The youth had returned to his seat near the door of the cottage, after witnessing the result of the chase, and had listlessly resumed his occupation. In a few moments the keel of the first boat grated upon the pebbly beach, and the commander sprang on shore.

"Well shot," cried he, turning to the solitary occupant of the second, who had already furled his sail and was making fast his little cable to the gnarled trunk of an ancient oak.

"Well shot, jolly smith of Mishawum," cried he, "for I should have been sorry had you taken better aim, and deprived me of my lawful honors. Say what you will, 't is no easy matter to hit a plunging devil of a moose, with nothing better than the top of a wave for your rest."

The moose had in the mean time been dragged upon the beach by two savages and an Englishman, all of whom appeared to be subordinates of the speaker. The animal, which was of gigantic stature, more than twenty hands high, with a short body, long, powerful, but rather awkward legs, and an enormous head, adorned with magnificent antlers, struggled but faintly with his captors, and, exhausted with his exertions, submitted to be thrown very summarily upon the ground with his legs tied together, while his large, pathetic eye seemed mutely to deprecate his fate.

Robert Bootefish was a short, squat looking individual of fifty, with a pudding face, in which a pair of twinkling eyes were almost extinguished by his shaggy brows, while a copper-colored nose, pierced like a flaming beacon, through a fog of greyish

for it must be admitted that in fiction there is "no more dangerous wild-fowl" than your Indian, not even "your lion." But it is not an Indian story. The savages are left in the back-ground, although it would have been difficult and impolite to turn them altogether out of their country at that early period.

I will only observe, in conclusion, that if the epoch sometimes seems dreary, and the story dull, the dulness is intentional, and must be imputed entirely to the didactic nature of the subject. As somebody says in the Spectator, "Whenever I am dull, the reader may be sure I have a design in it."

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"And I am ashamed that the worshipful Master Morton, Lord of Misrule and Sachem of Merry-Mount, should have been obliged to receive a rebuke from one wholly a tyro in the science," answered Jaspar — "but stay; I hear a footstep in the thicket." And with the graceful bound of a panther, he flew towards the wood.

CHAPTER II.

THE LORD OF MERRY-MOUNT.

During Jaspar's absence, the others seated themselves composedly upon the rocks near the shore.

The first comer, Thomas Morton, was a man of middling height, and might have numbered some forty years. His features were regular, his hazel eye was large and laughing, his complexion fair but sunburned, his hair and beard auburn. His mustachios were curled upwards, and his long love locks were arranged with the coquetry of a man, who, even in the wilderness, seemed to value the graces of his person. His well knit figure was arrayed in a buff colored jerkin, with slashed sleeves, buttoned to the throat, and surmounted with a linen ruff. Dark colored trunk hose and boots of tawny leather completed his dress. In his girdle he wore a long sheathed knife, with his other hunting accoutrements, and in the hollow of his arm the fowling piece which had been so merciful to the departed moose. His companion, Thomas Walford, was a big, burly fellow, somewhat younger than himself, considerably more than six feet in height, with a swart complexion and harsh features, which were redeemed by a frank and manly expression. He was carelessly dressed in a hunting shirt and leggings of deerskin, and in his whole appearance presented a marked contrast to his friend.

Thomas Morton, who was a prominent actor in the veritable history which I have to relate, was a gentleman by birth and education. His father, an officer in the English army, had served with some distinction in the auxiliary legions under the banner of Henry of Navarre, and losing his life on the plains

of Normandy, had bequeathed a small patrimony to his son. The youth had, after a careful and classical preliminary education, entered himself at Clifford's Inn, and after completing his studies had been called to the bar. Here he might have prospered, and for aught we know have risen to be Lord Keeper, if, as he facetiously expressed it, he had been blessed with the faculty of keeping any thing — or rather, he would add, if he had not been addicted to keeping too much. He kept horses, hounds, and hawks, every thing in short, but his terms and his money. His career was brilliant but brief. His patrimony was soon exhausted. His creditors became impatient. Endowed with a teeming imagination, a sanguine temperament, and a vigorous constitution, he was suddenly inflamed with the desire of making a bold dash at fortune in the El Dorado of the west. The adventures of Raleigh, the romantic achievements of that poetical captain with the prosaic name of John Smith, all the accounts brought by hundreds of nameless voyagers to the new world, captivated his fancy. To a man beset by Jews at home, the Gentiles of the wilderness had no terrors. He had but few guineas left to sow, and he found England growing barren and fallow. He determined to transplant himself for a season into a new atmosphere and a new soil. Bright visions fluttered like golden singing birds around his midnight pillow. It was the fever of the age. It is difficult to realize the infatuation of certain classes of men at that day. The chimeras which were rampant in that century have been destroyed. Each age, like Saturn, devours its own children. The feudal sovereignties, palatinates, bishoprics, manorial lordships, with all the tinsel and glittering circumstance which are getting to be but threadbare patchwork even in olden countries, have left hardly a rag upon a bush in the western wilderness. When Beauchamp Plantagenet,* of Belvil, in New Albion or

* See Note I.

New England, Esquire, published his letters "to his suzerain lord, the right honorable and mighty Lord Edmond, by Divine Providence lord proprietor, earl palatine, governor and captain-general of the Province of New Albion," and gave the most minute directions towards planting and establishing a magnificient piece of secondhand feudality in the wilderness, he did not seem a whit ridiculous. Neither Beauchamp Plantagenet nor Thomas Morton were ridiculous, because they misapprehended the character of the movement which was setting towards America. They were wrong, and Thomas Morton suffered for his misapprehension of time, place, and circumstance, but these dreams spun their cobweb meshes around many vivid brains. Morton grew tired of Clifford's Inn, the charms of the Lord Keepership were dwarfed in long perspective. His debts harassed him. His mistresses and his friends went off with each other, leaving him to muse upon the instability of love and friendship. An unlucky duel, in which he was so unfortunate as desperately to wound an antagonist, whose friends were more powerful than his sword, came to add to his difficulties. He saw himself plunging from one scrape to another, with no hope of extrication. And so, rapidly converting all that was left of his patrimony into money, he suddenly embarked for America, some half dozen years before the period at which we have presented him to the reader.

He had at first found himself in Virginia; thence he had wandered in a northerly direction — had visited and quarrelled with the colonists of New Plymouth — had been with Mr. Weston's colony at Wessaguscus — with Captain Gorges — and afterwards with Captain Wollaston, at Mount Wollaston. Wollaston, who was a man of station, had engaged with him, in his undertaking, a few adventurers of his own rank, among whom was Morton, and had brought with him a large number of persons bound to servitude, after the manner of the day, besides artifi-

cers, mechanics and agriculturists, sufficient in his estimation to establish a colony upon a large scale. It is needless to say that religion had no part in this movement; and it is a striking fact, that of the many colonies attempted in Massachusetts, none succeeded except those which were planned and supported by religious enthusiasm. Mr. Weston's colony had dissolved within a year from its origination.

Captain Wollaston, who had planted himself very near his predecessors, in the neighborhood of the hill which still perpetuates his name, and who had been joined by the stragglers still remaining from previous settlements in the vicinity, found himself at the head of a disorderly and somewhat unmanageable crew, and becoming discouraged, soon retired to Virginia, taking with him a portion of his servants. The others remained under the nominal jurisdiction of one Filcher, whom he had appointed as his lieutenant, for the express purpose of conducting them to Virginia. It was now that Morton displayed his genius. Possessing a certain share in the adventure, he determined to make himself master of the whole colony. Inflaming the colonists with artful speeches, in which he warned them that they were about to be transported to Virginia, to be sold as slaves, and held out to them alluring prospects of wealth and good living if they rallied under his dominion, and remained where they were, he easily made them the instruments of his plan. Morton was eloquent, adroit, bold, good-humored, and luxurious and loose in his habits and principles. The motley troop of adventurers desired nothing better than to serve such a commander. They therefore exchanged their servitude to Captain Wollaston for a nondescript vassalage to Esquire Morton. He ruled them absolutely, for they were accustomed to be governed, and he possessed a superiority of intellect, education and character, which soon gave him unbounded dominion over them. His establishment at Mount Wollaston, the name

of which, upon his elevation to the sovereignty, he had changed to Merry-Mount, became a central point of attraction for all the straggling survivors of the different trading plantations which had been begun and abandoned during the previous few years. But while he seemed only bent upon the accumulation of wealth, by means principally of the beaver trade and of the fisheries, which he proposed to establish; and while his days were passed at Merry-Mount in a round of hunting and carousing; he in fact, in company with some other kindred spirits, was nourishing still bolder and more subtle schemes.

Among the original and most ardent encouragers of plantations in America, was a certain Sir Ferdinando Gorges, at that time Governor of Plymouth in old England. He was a knight of ancient family and large possessions, a devoted royalist, a bigot for church and state, and an ardent believer in the possibility of establishing vast and flourishing manorial and proprietary colonies in America, and particularly in New England. He had already expended large sums in attempts at colonization, the only fruit of which, then apparent, was an infant colony at Piscataqua, which he had founded in company with a Captain John Mason, and whither David Thompson, a Scottish gentleman of education, had been sent as governor, some years previously to the period in which our story opens. Thompson, however, not fascinated by the savage charms of Sagadehock, had soon retired from his satrapcy and established himself upon the island which still bears his name. Not only Morton, Gardiner, Thompson, of Thompson's Island, and Walford, but still other inhabitants of Massachusetts, of widely differing characters and pursuits, seemed united in some common purpose, and bound by a secret tie to Sir Ferdinando.

To the Plymouth brethren, Morton was a thorn which they endeavored incessantly to pluck out and cast from them. His whole existence seemed to them an insult, so utterly were his

character and principles opposed to their own, while at the same time their uneasiness seemed to have a deeper cause. His manner of dealing with the Indians, also, gave the Puritans great annoyance. Fully impressed with that grand characteristic of most Englishmen, a self-relying consciousness of national superiority, he treated the aborigines with a frank and cheerful contempt, which was not without its philosophy. Where two nations are mixed together, he would say, one or the other must rule. He therefore assumed, at starting, a careless, graceful superiority, which rather astonished the natives, but in the end convinced them that he was a great sachem, whom they ought willingly to obey. He was never deluded into any enthusiasm for savage dignity or poetry, but found the Rising Moon, the Floating Cloud of the North-west, and the indomitable Buffalo, all very useful fellows to supply him with beaver and deer-skins, and rewarded them according to their activity in his service, without any regard to the splendor of their lineage, or their private exploits of heroism.

The Indians, in the vicinity of Morton's residence, were peaceable in the main, well disposed towards the English, and more afraid of the encroachments of the Tarentines of the East, and the Pequods of the West, than of the pale-faced strangers, to whom they looked up for protection as to superior beings. Morton took the best advantage of this disposition. He taught a few of them the use of fire-arms. But a still more potent agent in his scheme of dominion, he found in that gigantic engine of mischief which was so destructive to these children of the forest. That wizard power, like the genie of the Arabian fisherman, was imprisoned in a bottle. By these means Morton had extended his system of semi-vassalage from his white subordinates over the Indians also. His horizon opened as he advanced. He was already grown to be a man of power and consequence. The Indians brought him in great store of

beaver, and he began to think himself likely to realize a colossal fortune at last in this most lucrative trade. His more extensive plans of dominion were associated with those of the Knight of Devonshire.

The other personage, Thomas Walford, was a bold blacksmith, who like Morton had originally emigrated to Virginia, but, becoming dissatisfied, had dwelt awhile with Weston's people. Being however a man of rather solitary disposition, he had struck out a pathway through the wilderness, and at the period when the reader makes his acquaintance he had seated himself at Mishawum. Upon the narrow peninsula between Mystic and Charles rivers, and directly opposite to the triple-headed promontory of Shawmut, the burly blacksmith built himself a thatched house, which he surrounded with a palisade to keep out the wolves and Indians. There he lived with his old woman, as he affectionately termed the bride who had followed his fortunes from the mother country, snapping his fingers at the Puritans, whom, like an orthodox Episcopalian as he was, he looked upon with aversion; and occasionally visiting his allies, the lord of Merry-Mount, the sachem of Squantum, and the man of mystery, at whose residence we found him at the beginning of the chapter, the impenetrable Sir Christopher Gardiner.

His land at Mishawum was held by a grant from the Gorges family. He was, like Morton, an object of suspicion to the brethren at Plymouth, and was moreover a stumbling-block in the path of those who were contemplating the establishment of a new and large colony in Massachusetts Bay. The grant of the New England council to Gorges of thirty miles of land in length, and ten in breadth, on the north-eastern side of Massachusetts Bay, although loosely worded, was an awkward and stubborn fact not to be circumvented, and, like his own sledge-hammer, not likely to lose any of its weight in the hands of Walford.

CHAPTER III.

THE KNIGHT OF THE SEPULCHRE.

Walford and Morton had remained composedly upon the beach for a few moments, when Jaspar reappeared, leaning affectionately upon the arm of an individual of striking appearance.

He was tall and thin, and wore a steeple-crowned hat, a short black cloak, with a white band about his throat, and other habiliments, of the sad color most cherished by the Puritans. He threw off his hat, however, as he approached, looking at it as he did so, with an expression of any thing but respect, and displaying, upon being uncovered, a head of remarkable beauty. His physiognomy was one of that rare character with which time seems powerless. It was impossible from his face, any more than from his spare but sinewy figure, and the Arab litheness of his movements, to guess at the number of years which had flown over him, without leaving a trace of their passage. Thick, Antinous-like curls hung in raven masses about a dark and thoughtful brow, — an eye, dark and commanding, but whose mysterious and changeful expression inevitably inspired the beholder with a sentiment both of interest and distrust, a complexion by nature or by exposure more swarthy than belongs to his race, severely chiselled features, and teeth glittering like a hound's through his coal black beard, were the characteristics of his countenance. It was certain that he had "past through the ambush of young days," but how far it was impossible to judge. Such was the individual whom men called Sir Christopher Gardiner.

The boy was hanging upon his arm and looking fondly up into his face, and he was followed closely by an enormous staghound, evidently wearied with a long tramp through the forest, but whose graceful and dignified activity seemed like his master's to triumph over fatigue.

"Good morrow, Master Merry-Mount," said he, extending his hand to Morton; "and good morning to you, worthy hermit of Mishawum, I am sorry that my absence should have lost me any portion of your visit to my humble abode. And how are the revellers of Passanogessit, Master Morton? Have a care, the shaven heads of Plymouth are keeping a sharp watch upon you. 'T is a pity you could not borrow a little of the caution of our phlegmatic friend here, worthy Tom Walford."

"To say the truth, Sir Christopher," answered Morton, "I have long since exhausted my talent at borrowing, and I doubt if I could thrive much even upon any advance from our friend St. Thomas the silentiary. His silence and his sledge-hammer are both very useful tools to himself, whose only companions are his wife and the wolves, not to speak irreverently of the virtuous Goodwife Walford; but we must all work with the implements of our trade, you know, and I must keep my tongue whetted, or my brains will rust with it."

"I repeat my warning," answered Gardiner, "that all our pains will be fruitless, if you are not disposed to govern yourself and your confederates a little more rigidly. I tell you, man, that there is great uneasiness at Plymouth."

"But they certainly are not aware that your humble servant, and their particular nightmare, Thomas Morton, the 'pettifogger of Clifford's Inn,' (as they call the most rising young barrister who ever turned his back upon the woolsack,) has the honor of your acquaintance."

"Certainly not," answered Gardiner, "you may be sure that the mention of your name always inspires me with holy horror.

They have no suspicion that the pious Gardiner, who seeks comfort in the refreshing bosom of their austere church ——"

"Cold comfort indeed," cried Morton, interrupting him with an affected shudder.

"That such a man as they know me to be, stooping under the burthen of his sins, and anxious only to seat himself by the outer door-post of the Temple of the Elect, can have sympathy or even acquaintance with the Godless Lord of Misrule, the disturber of the peace of Canaan, the din of whose revelry sounds so hideously upon the ears of the saints."

"As if this wide and boundless new world was discovered," cried Morton, "only that its forests might resound with their eternal trumpets and their shawms. But let them come to Merry-Mount themselves, they shall have better fare than parched corn and ditch water. Let them wet their beards and vinegar faces in our sparkling claret jugs, let them listen to a catch led off by the mellifluous tongue of Robert Bootefish yonder, let them look upon a wild dance of beaver coated nymphs ——."

"Perhaps they will make you a visit sooner than you think," interrupted Gardiner, as Morton, after having relieved his mind by this ebullition of spleen, lay kicking up his heels upon the grass — now humming a snatch of a drinking song, now muttering to himself a quotation from his favorite Horace — "perhaps your hospitality may be put sooner to the test than you suppose; I see you prick up your ears; take care that you keep them where they belong. The psalm singers have got a pillory, you know, and they are mightily expert at slicing off all superfluous appendages."

"Thank ye, Sir Kit," replied Morton. "But if my tongue endangers my ears, I have a hand, thank fortune, that shall protect them all. I know their fingers itch for my ears — nay, have they not already ornamented their accursed whipping-post

with one of the capital excrescences of my loyal subject, Humprey Rednape? Does he not suffer obloquy enough at the hands of his confederates Bootefish and Cakebread, and all the other unfeeling varlets? Does not that content them, but would they extend their sacrilegious shears even to the august cartilage of the suzerain of Merry-Mount?"

"I tell you, Morton, that they are no respecter of persons. They consider you a nuisance, and they long to have you in their power. Your ears are not worth a wolf's bounty, if they once get you into their clutches."

"The sacrilegious iconoclasts!" cried the imperturbable Morton. "Verily they carry their hatred of ornaments too far. Are not these distracted Puritans satisfied with having abolished copes and tippets and corner caps, that they rage so carnally even against such trifling ornaments as your humble servant's ears? Truly their love of simplicity is unbecoming. Their hatred of ceremony carries them too far."

"You will find they will use little ceremony if they once proceed to extremities with you."

"But I tell thee, Sir Kit, they shall have nothing to do with my extremities. I will neither lend mine ears to their counsels, nor make a present of them to their pillories. Hang them, let them trim their own heads, the crop-eared Israelites! Let them purify Canaan, — but, by Plutus and Rhadamanthus, let them beware of entering the precincts of Merry-Mount! My Cerberus never sleeps on his post, and a single growl of his would frighten them back to their dingy kennels, aye, even if they were led on by the valorous Captain Shrimp himself."

"If you speak of Captain Standish," interposed the phlegmatic Walford, who had hitherto taken but little part in the conversation, "if you speak of Captain Standish, mayhap you may find him no baby, small as he is. He carries a two-fisted rapier, would split your skull as easy as I could crack a cocoa-

nut with my sledge-hammer, and he wears an iron pot on his head — I know it, for I have had the tinkering of the same — would take a swinging thump as easy as my anvil, and never the worse."

"Vulcan, Vulcan," replied the unabashed Morton, "your remarks are unsavory — they smell of the shop — what is all this about anvils and sledge-hammers? Let little Captain Shrimp not venture to Merry-Mount. He shall find no Wittewamotts nor Pecksuots, I promise you — he shall be boiled in his own iron pot, boiled, aye, and eaten too as sauce to my salmon, the pungent little shrimp."

"Mayhap you may find him a bit too peppery for your taste," answered the honest blacksmith.

"And I have a mind," interposed Sir Christopher, "that better things may be done with Captain Standish, or Captain Shrimp, as you call him, than eating him. I have had no interview with him yet, but such an ally as he would be invaluable — at all events, I agree in the warning of our honest Walford here. Be cautious, keep quiet for the present, don't stir up these grim fellows before the time."

"Trust me for defending my strong hold," answered Morton, more seriously. "Trust me for keeping, for the present, out of the clutches even of the puissant Shrimp."

"Marry do so," said the blunt blacksmith; "you'll find the hug of a bear as soft as a young maid's arms in comparison. But Sir Christopher has not yet informed us when he left Plymouth, nor how he travelled thence."

"I preferred, as you know, to travel by land and on foot," said Sir Christopher.

"The post-roads being much out of repair," interrupted the facetious Morton.

"I have been sojourning a week among the saints," continued Gardiner, "leaving Jaspar and the faithful Sketwarroes

to keep house in my absence. I am still an humble candidate for admission to their sanctuary, but I have ventured to broach but little of our scheme of transplanting their colony to Shawmut. Besides, I am still waiting for dispatches from Sir Ferdinando in reply to my last letters."

"As for the Indians," continued Gardiner, musingly, "they are the best friends we have — I mean in any considerable numbers of course — and very useful instruments I intend to make them. I have as much reliance on a savage's sagacity and friendship as on a white man's. They are easily led, if you make them look up to you as a protector and a God."

"And I will say," said Morton, "of my own knowledge, that they are better fellows, and will make better Christians, than the Puritans. Have I not converted more of the heathen, every year, by reading the liturgy to them, than the saints will convert in a century?"

"Say, rather, perverted," said Gardiner.

"I say," continued Morton, warmly, "that my savage subjects are rapidly becoming as civilized and as respectable a body of rascals as my Christian ones."

"And no such difficult matter either," said the blunt blacksmith, "if a body may judge from that lobster Bootefish, yonder."

"Bootefish — Bootefish!" cried Morton, in so loud a tone as to arouse that worthy individual from the innocent slumber which he had been enjoying in the sunshine during this protracted conversation. "I say, Robin," he continued, with affected indignation, as the red faced and red coated worthy advanced, stretching his long arms and his bandy legs to shake off his lethargy; "this mechanical son of Jupiter has the audacity to call you a lobster, and moreover denies that you are a Christian; what do you think of that?"

"Son of Jupiter, your worship — Christian, your worship!"

exclaimed Bootefish, his brain evidently laboring to take in at one effort the incongruous images suddenly presented to him, and his small elephant eyes drowsily rolling from one of his companions to the other; "I hope I despise Christians — I mean Puritans — as a Christian Episcopalian should. Down with the Puritans! down with the lobsters! at any rate, your worship," grumbled the veteran, now thoroughly awake. "Tell Master Walford that if I am a lobster he had better keep out of my claws."

"Bravo, Bootefish!" cried Morton. "Let me echo his warning, Master Vulcan, in fair payment for the one you gave me just now. A lobster is as dangerous as a shrimp, you may find; aye, and wears as good a coat of mail to his back."

And so the sovereign of Merry-Mount, who was never so happy as when he could quibble upon the redoubtable Miles Standish, the hero of Plymouth, to whom he had an invincible dislike, rubbed his hands triumphantly, as he looked at the blacksmith.

That gigantic individual looked down with the most benignant expression at the ludicrous indignation of Bootefish, without troubling himself much about the claws to which he alluded in so threatening a manner.

"This is one of your instruments for turning savages into Christians, then, I suppose," said he to Morton.

"Christians, I defy you!" said the indignant Robert; "I am head clerk and precentor at Merry-Mount, Master Walford, I would have you to know. Head clerk and chief butler too, and not a man to be looked down upon by a blacksmith. Who sets all the psalms at Merry-Mount, I should like to know, but Robert Bootefish? Who makes the responses, I humbly ask, but Bootefish again? Who taps all the ale casks but Bootefish?" And Robert Bootefish, concluding his observations, smote his breast, and looked daggers at the undisturbed blacksmith.

"Well, well, lobster!" said he, not heeding the frown which gathered like a cloud around the shaggy brows of the clerk of Merry-Mount at the repetition of the offensive epithet. "Well, well," said he, innocently continuing his bantering, "I dare to say, you will redden even the noses of the red men with your liquor. As for your psalms and responses, I have n't much more faith in such forms than the Puritans themselves, if your church and cellar be all one, as it seems. Tell the poor devils of savages to follow your nose to heaven. 'T is a burning and shining light, a beacon that is never quenched!"

Bootefish's wrath was thoroughly aroused. His nose, which might be said to be his only feature, flashed with indignation. Plucking his knife from his sheath, he rushed, as furiously as his duck legs would carry him, towards his provoking antagonist.

The phlegmatic blacksmith, even at that moment hardly aware that his victim was really out of temper, looked for a few seconds in utter astonishment at his ferocious onset, jumped back with agility, in time to escape with only a wound on his gigantic thumb, from a furious blow aimed at him with the hunting knife; and then, rushing forward with the ponderous velocity of a bull, seized his squat assailant in his iron grasp, lifted him bodily from the ground, pitched him heels over head some half a dozen yards through the air, and then, recovering his composure, looked tranquilly on, as the unfortunate head butler, after describing his parabola through the air, alighted in a most undignified posture, directly between his two Indian proselytes.

These individuals, whom the facetious Morton called his serfs, it will be remembered were the oarsmen of his boat, and had been gravely squatting upon their hams and smoking their pipes on the same spot, and in the same attitude, ever since their arrival. Upon the sudden descent of the luckless Bootefish between them, one of them assisted him to his feet, while the

other, with unperturbed visage, took his pipe from his mouth and ejaculated, "Ugh, is my brother hurt?" and without pausing for a reply, he grunted — "The Thunder-cloud of Mishawum is strong; my brother is fat; he cannot wrestle with the Thunder-cloud of Mishawum."

"Thunder-cloud be damned!" muttered the pious precentor of Merry-Mount, who, finding himself unhurt, although marvellously discomfitted, thought it necessary, on being picked up and set on his legs again, to manifest a show of hostility, although taking care to keep at a convenient distance from the stalwart smith. "The Thunder-cloud of Mishawum may thank his stars that my foot slipped upon the grass as it did, else I would have stuck him like a pig."

Morton, who had been enjoying the scene amazingly, while Gardiner, hardly heeding what was going forward, had been conversing in an under tone with Jaspar, now stepped forward and addressed the brooding Bootefish.

"Faith, thy hand is out at wrestling, Robin," said he. "Where is thy boasted Indian hug, of which we hear so much when there are no Indians, nor bears, nor blacksmiths, to practise it upon? Never did I see a man fly through the air so buoyantly. 'Dædaleo ocyor Icaro.' By my soul, the blacksmith has given thee wings, man."

"Never you mind, never you mind, your worship," muttered his satellite, in a gloomy and threatening manner; "the time will come. Revenge I will have, as sure as he lives. The man who injures Bootefish never went unpunished yet."

"Tush, tush, man," said the good-humored Morton. "Never make such a pother about a tumble on the green sward. Never nourish ill blood, man; 't will only make your nose redder, and the blacksmith's jibes still saucier. Shake hands, and be friends with him again."

"Aye," said the hearty blacksmith, proffering his mighty

hand, "shake hands and be-friends again, Robin Bootefish. Give us thy claw, hang me — give us thy fist, man. A body must defend his bread basket, you know."

"Does he withdraw the lobster?" asked Bootefish, in a stately manner.

"He does, he does, every claw of him," answered Morton. "And if not, what is a lobster, but a church dignitary — a red-robed cardinal? So make haste, for I am in a hurry to be off; and a quarrel between two such trusty friends of mine I could never endure. So, I say, make haste — kiss, and be friends."

The worthy Bootefish relented, seizing the proffered hand of his late antagonist with such cordiality, that it might have been thought he intended to have literally obeyed the injunction of his superior. The blacksmith, however, apparently not desirous of the actual osculation he contemplated, kept him at metaphorical distance, and shaking his hand with an honest effusion of friendship, bade him forgive and forget, with a good-humored expression of countenance, which was reflected back in a sunny glow from the face of the chief butler.

"You propose visiting Master Blaxton, you say. If you do so, please convey this packet to him," said the knight, extending a carefully sealed paper to the blacksmith.

"Willingly, Sir Christopher. It is about the turn of the tide now, and I may as well take the parson on my way homeward. Good day, my masters all — and good day, worthy Bootefish. No malice now, I suppose?"

"None, Goodman Walford," said the pacified lobster, waving both his claws amicably to the departing smith.

Walford's little boat was soon tossing upon the tide, and his sail had disappeared behind the headlands of the cove, when Gardiner observed to Morton, —

"A sinewy fellow, that Walford, and as tough and as true as his own sledge-hammer. With a hundred or two of such giants,

one might conquer a world. If Standish were but upon our side, ———."

"I tell you, you might as well expect to turn yonder river backwards, and make it flow to its fountain again. There is no turning nor twisting that sturdy little shrimp. I will say that of him, small as is the love I bear him," answered Morton.

"It has been a fixed notion with Sir Ferdinando," said Gardiner, "that the Plymouth company, who have already been much indebted to his exertions, might be induced to transplant themselves to a position which they acknowledge to be vastly more attractive, and to settle under his jurisdiction. This would be an immense advantage at starting, and our rivals in England, who are bent upon outwitting him, and upon sending another and a powerful colony to these parts, might be foiled. Let but his charter and his commission pass the seals, with a flourishing colony already established, in a most admirable position, as a nucleus, and with the reinforcements that Sir Ferdinando and his powerful and wealthy kinsmen (to say nothing of Mason and Lord Arundel) have promised, and leave the rest to me."

"But Southcote and Rosewell, and the Vassalls, and Saltonstalls, have an amazing influence; and more potent than all, are Mr. Humphrey and Isaac Johnson, the brothers-in-law of the powerful Earl of Lincoln. 'T is said that they actually contemplate removing hither themselves; and that Lady Arabella and Lady Susan are fanatical enough to follow their husbands into the wilderness," said Morton.

"Aye," replied Gardiner, "but Lord Lincoln's influence is not so certain."

"At all events," said Morton, "the old Gorges patent is good as far as it goes. I have studied at Clifford's Inn long enough to know that."

"Yes," replied the other, "and it furnishes moreover, added to actual possession, a sufficient ground for enlarging it. Trust

me, we shall yet outwit the Puritans, and if they settle at all, they shall settle under us. Give me but men, money, and a little time, and trust me, I will build a colony such as the world has never seen. A powerful metropolis in the bottom of this bay, and flourishing commercial towns at Mishawum and Naumkeak, to say nothing of your Passanogessit, extensive fisheries, and an exclusive trade with the Indians, a strong proprietary government, a new order of nobility, a peasantry with a bountiful soil, and a strong government to protect them — these seem but dreams, but they are visions which shall be history, before many years have rolled over our heads. The Lord Palatine of Massachusetts will soon hold his head high at home. Aye, they shall find, perhaps," continued Gardiner, with flashing eyes, "that the worm which they thought to tread out of existence shall turn upon them yet — the serpent is not crushed — and they shall find his fangs have grown."

Morton, who was apparently accustomed to these occasional ebullitions of passion from Gardiner, although he was not perhaps thoroughly aware of all their causes, waited coolly till his companion was more composed, when he observed, —

"Your future Majesty of Massachusetts will not forget the claims of your faithful ally and prime minister. Remember the services of a jurisconsult, and more particularly of one familiar with the codes of the conquered nations, will be invaluable in our nascent empire."

"I never forget friend or foe," said Gardiner, "and you are a tried and trusty friend. I would to God you were a little more cautious one. By the way," added he, "is Harry Maudsley still dwelling at Merry-Mount?"

"He is," said Morton; "but he is an impracticable fellow — brave, but wayward — moody, sometimes, and passionate — and at other times gay, and as full of reckless fun as the best, or worst of us. I sometimes hardly know what to think of the lad."

"Maudsley is dangerous," said Gardiner, "and I will tell you moreover, whatever he seems, that he has a purpose here in this wilderness, sometimes he seems to me inclined to fanaticism, and yet I hardly know, there is something about him I should like to fathom."

"Why, do you know him so well?" asked Morton, "I hardly thought you were acquainted with the lad. Have you known him in England?"

"I know what I know," said Sir Christopher in a gloomy voice, with a scowl darkening his brow — "I tell you he is dangerous — ask me no further."

The sun had by this time past far below the zenith, and thick clouds were rolling themselves in dark and cumulous masses from the north. The short-lived glory of an April day was rapidly becoming obscured, the sea was black and troubled, and the fickle breath of the sweet south-west had already sighed its last among the leafless oaks around them.

"The devil take these assassin spring days," cried Morton, "smiling hypocritically in your face, and whipping you through the lungs with an east wind, as sharp as your rapier. I had twenty times rather face an honest tempest, with its fog, rain, or snow. A warm friend and a bitter enemy for me. There may be something congenial to a Puritan's ideas in these days of sanctimonious sunshine, chilled all the while by an east wind as sour as their tempers, and eternal as their sermons, but not to mine, by Jupiter."

"Nor to mine," said Gardiner abstractedly.

"But while I am talking of sunshine," continued Morton, "the sun is sinking into yonder mass of clouds, and the north-easter is beginning to pipe among the pines — I must be off. So I say, you, Robin Bootefish, get the boat off, and look lively, man, we have no time to lose, if the black snout of yonder

grim monster of a cloud, which has already swallowed the sun, is not to open upon and devour us also. So be alive, Robert!

'tu, nisi ventis
Debes ludibrium, cave,'

which being interpreted, is, stir your fins, O Bootefish, if you would escape a wet jacket."

The worthy precentor, butler, and boatswain, of the eccentric Morton, being thus exhorted, got the boat expeditiously under weigh, with the assistance of his two savage proselytes, and the Lord of Merry-Mount jumped briskly aboard, having shaken hands and warmly bade farewell to his companions.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LUDLOWS AT NAUMKEAK.

The low, flat, narrow tongue of land, formed by two estuaries of the Atlantic, upon which stands at this day the venerable and wealthy city of Salem, had been, until about two years previously to the commencement of our story, entirely without inhabitants. The great and singular mortality, called by some contemporary writers, the plague, which had swept away the Indians so fearfully, at a period just previous to the arrival of the pilgrims at Plymouth, as to prostrate their strength, and to open their territories, as it were, to the footsteps of the white men, had been equally terrible in its devastations along the whole coast, and far into the interior of Massachusetts. Naumkeak, if it had ever been occupied by the Indians, had, at any rate, lost its native population, whether by death or desertion, and was in 1626 a silent and savage wilderness, untenanted save by the wolf and the bear.

Among those persons, numerous at that time in England, of good "quality, figure, and estate," who were disheartened by the movement towards papacy of the English hierarchy under the new reign of Charles I., was a certain Walter Ludlow. Sprung of an ancient lineage, and inheriting a respectable fortune, he had for the first few years of his manhood taken but little interest in affairs, either of church or state. In that age, however, of religious excitement, apathy upon such matters was rare. Religion was the heart and soul of the times. The long smothered fires lighted with torches, snatched from the funeral

piles of a thousand martyrs, were at last breaking out with devastating fury throughout the breadth of Europe. The flaming sword of God seemed, in the eyes of bigots and enthusiasts, to wave the human race on to battle, and armies of Christians crusading against Christians filled the air with their hostile shouts, and shook the soil of Christendom to its centre. From many a sacked and burning city, smoking like a sacrifice of blood and fire to the savage Deity, whom they worshipped in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arose the wail of outraged women — the shrieks of butchered age or helpless infancy, mingled with the roar of cannon, the yells of triumph, the curses of the dying — a confused and hideous din, by which was manifested the baleful presence of religious war.

In such an age, to be indifferent in religious matters was difficult. It was almost impossible to avoid being a bigot, or enthusiast, or, what was most usual, both. Walter Ludlow, whose soul was first awakened to deep religious contemplation, upon the death of the wife of his youth, who was taken from him, after they had laid their two children in the grave, became converted to the principles of Puritanism during a brief and accidental visit made by him at Leyden.

Ludlow was naturally a man of a melancholy and enthusiastic character, to which his domestic affliction, and his subsequent religious conversion, had imparted a deeper and a sterner tinge.

He despaired of seeing the day-star of a brighter morning ever rise upon the land, and his thoughts turned to the wilderness.

With his young and beautiful sister, the only person near of kin to him, who had been his sole companion at his desolate fire-side, who had been willing to share his sorrow, as she had shared his joy, and who deeply and enthusiastically sympathized in his despondency as to the prospects of their religion, he had at last embarked for New England.

Belonging to no particular religious association, he had at first visited and sojourned awhile at the infant colony of Plymouth, but, from a variety of reasons, not being satisfied with his residence there, he had removed not a great while before the period of our tale to the neighborhood of Naumkeak, to which place the scanty remnant of the Cape Ann colony had removed.

It was a few days after the events recorded in the last chapter, that Walter Ludlow and his sister Esther were wandering upon the wild and wooded peninsula, near which they had established their temporary home.

"This chill breath from the sea, these gloomy and leafless forests, this silent solitude which enwraps us as with a mighty funeral pall," said Ludlow, "are but a sad exchange for the soft airs and the opening blossoms of your old home, Esther. I fear you will bitterly repent, ere long, that you followed the fortunes of one whom God hath stricken, and sent into the wilderness to die."

"Alas!" said Esther, "if the returning spring could but warm the freezing current of your heart; if but a few faded flowers could but revive again, which in old and happy times blossomed about your pathway, I should regret nothing, not even the garden flowers of England. Say rather that I should regret only for your sake, that we have taken the pilgrim's staff and scrip — for indeed you should have a bolder, or at least a more elastic and hopeful heart, to struggle among the heathen in this land of dark shadows."

"Your existence was not broken like mine," said Ludlow, "your future was not like mine, a pathway through eternal snow. Let the broken-hearted and world-weary man wear the cowl of his solitude — let him wrap the desert about him even as a garment of sackcloth. But I had forgotten, even thou hast sorrow of thine own," said Ludlow, pausing for a moment, while his sister answered him with a suppressed sigh ——

"No, Walter," said she, "I have no sorrows, no regrets of mine own. I know to what you allude, but I have cast from my heart an image which strove to impress itself there against my will. A worldling, a scorner of our religion, shall never hold the humblest place in my heart. One, who had dared to mock at my faith, and even to sneer at your melancholy madness and fanaticism, as he termed it, shall never cause me one tear of regret at leaving the land of my fathers."

"Alas!" said the moralizing Ludlow, "the world, like the sea, engulphs our treasures. Beneath the tossing waters of the world how sink our proudest hopes! There, sunk forever, lie our joys, our ambition, our love, all the ingots of our heart cast from us in the storm, even as glittering robes, heaps of uncounted gold and priceless gems lie buried in the depths of ocean! But think you, Esther, that Maudsley hath already forgotten and forsworn you? I always thought there was much good in him, and he might have been yet saved even as a brand from the burning. Think you never to behold his face again?"

"Never," said Esther, sternly conquering an emotion which seemed to have more power over her heart than her spirit. "Never," said she firmly, "for I have set up my staff forever in this wilderness, and have bade farewell forever to our ancient home, and you surely cannot believe that the gay and careless Henry Maudsley, caressed by the world, and loving its caresses, is likely to abandon the pleasures of his youth and station in England, to take up his abode in the deserts of the new world."

"I know not, Esther, Maudsley is of an adventurous disposition, impressionable, wayward, but of a deeper and a stronger nature, I think, than you believe."

"You judge him too generously, I fear," said Esther. "But what is he to us? We have looked our last upon him — for believe me, the wilderness is no place for him — the ocean rolls between us forever."

The conversation here ended abruptly — Ludlow saying that he had papers to examine, turned back to their residence. This was a rude but extensive log-house, which stood on the edge of the forest, surrounded by a small plot of garden ground. In its neighborhood were two smaller buildings of the same character, appropriated to the half dozen bound servants whom Ludlow had brought with him, and the whole precinct was inclosed with a ten foot palisade, formed by unbarked trees driven close together into the earth, presenting an humble but picturesque appearance.

Esther sat musing long and deeply upon the rustic seat, formed upon the stump of a gigantic oak, where she had been conversing with her brother. It seemed a strange effect of destiny, that so beautiful a creature, well born, acccomplished, and gifted with higher and stronger intellectual powers than often falls to the lot of woman, should thus be seated musing alone in that wild forest. Esther was beautiful. Her features, although distinguished by an extreme purity of outline, possessed great mobility and variety of expression; her fair hair was smoothed placidly from a forehead, which, as in all classic faces, was rather low, but of madonna-like breadth and pensiveness; her eyes were long and full, and thoughtful rather than passionate. Her sad-colored garments, of the unadorned simplicity affected by the Puritan women of England, were not unbecoming to a figure slightly exceeding middle height, and possessing the robust, healthful, but eminently feminine development characteristic of English beauty, and heightened her resemblance to those types of virgin grace and purity, the early madonnas, painted by Raphael, while something of Perrugino's severity still lingered around his pencil.

Wearied with her solitary reflections, she at last arose and wandered through the open glade which stretched from the edge of the pine forest near their residence, and was ornamented

with magnificent oaks of many a century's growth, and covered with strong coarse grass, springing in wild luxuriance from the virgin soil. She amused herself with gathering a few violets, almost buried in the rank verdure, and sighed as she compared their almost scentless petals with the delicious fragrance of their sister flowers at home.

The oaks which studded the waving sea of turf around her, brought to her remembrance the bosky parks and ancestral trees of England, and the early birds of spring, filling the air with their clamorous melody, as they darted from the ground, or made the leafless spray vocal with their love songs, soothed her thoughts, and bore them far away to softer and fondly remembered scenes.

She had wandered insensibly farther from her palisaded home than she intended, and was approaching a thickly wooded and swampy forest of maples and birches, in which the glade was terminated, when she was suddenly startled from her reverie, by a low, suppressed noise, which strangely resembled the angry growling of a dog. What was her horror upon looking up, to behold a large wolf upon the verge of the thicket, standing motionless with eyes glaring full upon her, twenty paces from the spot where she stood.

The animal was as large as the largest sized dog, and might have been mistaken for one, but for his small erect ears, pointed snout, and long bushy tail, resembling that of a fox. Grisly grey in color, broad breasted, lean paunched, with yellow green eyes flashing savage fire upon her, he sat upon his haunches, motionless, as if carved in stone, and fascinating the lonely girl by his fixed and terrible stare.

The American wolf is a ferocious, but comparatively a cowardly animal, and except impelled by famine is slow to attack the human race. The winter had, however, been long and stern, and these savage creatures had often hunted in droves

about the neighborhood, preying upon the few domestic animals, which the planters had brought with them, and filling the air at midnight with their howlings. Esther was aware that the courageous men, who inhabited that lonely wilderness, were accustomed to encounter these brutes, single-handed, without fear, and she had often been told that the animal would shrink like a whipped cur from the attack of man. But thus, solitary, and far from help, to be confronted with a ferocious beast of the forest, was a fearful thing for a maiden nurtured all her life in the security of a civilized land. Frozen almost to a statue with terror, with marble cheek, rigid lips, suppressed breath, and eyes almost starting from their sockets, she instinctively, and as if impelled by an irresistible fascination, gazed full into the eyes of her ferocious antagonist. The lion is fabled to crouch submissively at a virgin's feet, but the wolf who cowers before the strong man was never thought to be generous to the helpless. Was it then the mysterious power of the human eye, which seemed to exert its subtle and unfathomable influence upon that compact mass of savage sinew, bone, and muscle, subjugating the will which they should have instinctively obeyed, and checking the wild impulse which would have driven the brute, with one savage bound, upon its prey? Could it be fear that kept the monster motionless, crouching, but glaring still with those eyeballs of fire? Was it all real, or was her fearful foe but a phantom of her heated imagination?

Her brain reeled, the vast and leafless oaks seemed to whirl and dance around her; the mighty forest, swaying before the rising wind, seemed to rush through the air, sweeping and shifting from earth to heaven, as in the mad and bewildering changes of a dream. The incessant and shrill notes of a thousand singing birds thrilled in her ears like the warning cry of invisible spirits. Every thing seemed to move and change around her; there was a rushing in her ears, as of a mighty

wind, and then all seemed growing black as a funeral pall. She roused herself from the swoon which she felt was coming over her. It was no dream, the woods had ceased to move, save to the gentle impulse of the morning breeze; she was alone in the wilderness, and there stood the gaunt wolf, with his glittering teeth and fearful stare, motionless and threatening as before.

She roused herself at last, and became perfectly calm. She reflected that the beast who shrunk from the conflict with a man, might even cower before the attack of a determined woman.

She had a slight branch in her hand, which she had accidentally picked from the ground in her walk — a dried, leafless, last year's shoot, feeble as a rush, and held in the weak hand of a woman. But she had aroused her spirit now; her heart throbbed high with excitement, and the blood which had been chilled bounded like impetuous fire through her veins. She advanced a step forward, brandishing the weapon above her head, with her eyes flashing full upon her adversary. The wolf sprang to his feet, glared fixedly upon her, but stood motionless as before. He seemed irresolute, whether to advance upon his antagonist, or to retreat into the forest. She moved a step nearer, her nerves quivering with strange excitement. It was a contest not of strength, but of nerve; not of muscle, but of spirit. Her foe remained motionless upon his feet. She advanced another step. She was near enough to hear his suppressed breathing. Another, and the wolf with a furious glare opened his armed jaws, and uttered a long, dismal howl, which resounded fearfully through the forest, and struck renewed terror to the heart of the unprotected girl.

She paused again, as if paralyzed, and stood unable to advance or to retreat, within ten yards of the ferocious brute, who remained still glaring, and motionless, but seeming less intimi-

dated than enraged. Esther's strength began to fail her — her prayers froze upon her lips — her eyes grew dim — but, even as they glazed, she saw the wolf springing towards her. Suddenly the bushes of a remote thicket cracked beneath an advancing step; the report of a firearm rang through the wood, and the furious beast, bounding high in air, fell stone dead at her feet.

Exhausted by emotion, overwhelmed by the sudden change from imminent and fearful death, to life and safety again, Esther sank insensible upon the ground. The hunter, to whose sure but distant aim her preservation was owing, struggled slowly through the tangled and swampy thicket through which he had plunged to her rescue, when suddenly a tall form, in a short, dark cloak, and steeple-crowned hat, strode down the glade from the opposite quarter, lifted the unconscious maiden in his arms, and bore her towards her residence. That man was Sir Christopher Gardiner.

A moment afterwards, a young man, in hunting attire, emerged breathless from the thicket, and stood upon the spot where Esther Ludlow had for a few moments endured such speechless agony, and where, but for his prompt assistance, she must have died a fearful death.

The youth was tall and slender, but active and muscular. His chestnut love-locks, long enough to distract the whole congregation at Plymouth, his clear, hazel eye, and regular features, proclaimed his Anglo Saxon blood, which his bronzed cheek and wild attire might have almost rendered doubtful.

Esther was gone, and there was nothing upon the sward save the bleeding carcass of the wolf. The hunter spurned it contemptuously with his foot, and then leaned, lost in thought, upon his fowling-piece.

CHAPTER V.

THE MISRULE OF MERRY-MOUNT.

We must now shift the scene again to Massachusetts Bay; for Naumkeak, being without the semicircle inclosed between the points Nahant and Nantasco, was not a part of the territory which then bore that denomination.

Upon the southern side of the bay, and a little westerly from the mouth of Wessaguscus river, upon which the unsuccessful plantations of Weston and Captain Gorges had been seated, stands Mount Wollaston. It was here that the reader's acquaintance, Thomas Morton, after the spot had been deserted by the original founder of the settlement, had established his whimsical sovereignty.

A miscellaneous collection of settlers, some of them servants of the original proprietors, and some of them adventurers of various degree, had crystallized about this point as a common centre. These, with a small number of vagabond, peaceable Indians, the broken remnant of a tribe almost annihilated by the pestilence, and who entertained much the same kind of veneration for their white superior, which the savage caliban did for Stephano and his bottle, composed the rabble rout which the worthy Morton was fond of calling his subjects.

Merry-Mount — for by that cheerful title, most grating to the ears of the Plymouth people, was the place now designated — was as agreeable a place for an exile's residence as could have been found in the Bay. In the centre of a half moon, the two horns of which curved outward to the sea, forming a broad and sheltered basin, was a singularly shaped, long, elevated mound,

rising some fifty feet above the level of the tide. It was a natural knoll of gravel, resembling in its uniformity an artificial embankment; and although fringed about its base and its sides by white pines and red cedars, it was in its centre entirely bare of wood, and presented a bold front to the sea, which was separated from it only by a narrow strip of marsh. Beyond this cliff, upon the right, as you looked from the hill towards the ocean, was the broad mouth of Wessaguscus river; upon the left, a slender creek wound its tortuous way, through a considerable extent of salt marsh to the sea. Beyond the creek and the marsh, was a line of prettily indented coast, with the picturesque promontory of Squantum bending sharply towards the ocean, near which, on the landward side, was a large, wooded, island-like hammock, called Massachusetts, or the Arrow Head, the residence, previously to the plague, of Chickatabot, sagamore of the adjacent territory called the Massachusetts Fields. Many gently swelling hills rose, one upon the other, beyond, thickly crowned with white oak, hickory, and ash, whose gigantic, but still leafless tracery, was clearly defined upon the sombre background of the shadowy pine forests, which closed the view towards Shawmut, and completely shut out that peninsula.

On the inland side, the eye was delighted with a soft and beautiful panorama. As the region had long been inhabited, at previous epochs, by the Indians, there were many open clearings; and the underbrush and thicket having been, according to their custom, constantly burned, the tall oaks and chestnuts grew every where in unincumbered magnificence, and decorated a sylvan scene, of rolling hills, wide expanses, and woody dells, more tranquil and less savage than could have been looked for in the wilderness. Seaward, from the Mount, the view was enchanting. Round islands, tufted with ancient trees, and looking like broken links from the chain of hills around, seemed to float far out upon the waves, till they were one be-

yond another lost in the blue distance; while a low, but beautifully broken line of coast, fringed the purple expanse of the surrounding ocean, and completed the wilderness picture, fresh from the hand of Nature.

In a sheltered nook, at the base of the cliff, with the river on the right, an inlet from the Atlantic in front, and embowered with ancient oaks, stood a very large, rambling, picturesque house, built of the unbarked trunks of colossal trees, squared, and cemented together with clay. Adjacent was a large plot of garden ground, and scattered around, in pretty close proximity, were some twenty smaller log huts, interspersed occasionally with rude Indian wigwams. A space of a dozen acres, including the Mount, was inclosed by a strong palisade, and upon the summit of the hill was a small fort, provided with a couple of murtherers, or demi-culverins.

Such was Merry-Mount, and such the domain of Thomas Morton, suzerain of Merry-Mount, as he styled himself, and Master of Misrule as he was designated by the Plymouth people, to whom he was an abomination.

It was late in the afternoon of a foggy and ungenial day. A noise of merriment within the "Palace," as Morton denominated his log-house, caused the ancient forest to ring again. In the principal apartment, was spread a long and ample table. Upon the rude but capacious hearth blazed a mighty pile of hickory logs, crackling defiance to the rain and wind that were beating and howling without; while, for additional illumination, were huge torches of pitch pine, stuck in pewter sconces, and emitting a shifting but brilliant flare, which lighted up the gathering twilight of the perverse April evening.

Seated at the head of his rude table, with pipe in mouth, and a vast tankard at his elbow, was seated the Lord of Merry-Mount. At some distance below, was seated his lieutenant, Robin Bootefish, of the purple proboscis. Next to him was

seated a thin, spare individual, with a face like a roasted apple, brown and puckered, with a thousand wrinkles — with glittering black eyes — and with wild, staring, iron-grey hair, rising above his head like a halo.

Opposite to him was a swarthy, sprawling, good-for-nothing looking vagabond, with long legs, a short body, and monstrously long hair, ostentatiously combed down towards his shoulders, surmounted with a cap, slouched very much upon one side, and ornamented with an eagle's feather. Next to him was a little man with a yellow jerkin, yellow hose, a yellow beard, and a yellow complexion, with a piping voice, a pointed nose, and a restless demeanor, who was forever hopping on and off his stool, and bobbing about from one place to another, with such smirking vivacity, that, in view of all these qualities, the master of Merry-Mount had christened him the Canary Bird, although his true name, as he would frequently aver, in the shrillest and most chirping tones, was in reality Bernaby Doryfall. Besides these individuals, were a few others, not worthy of being particularized, who were pretty much of the same stamp, all careless, jovial vagabonds, all with pipes in their mouths, and all occupied very indefatigably in pushing about a jorum, brewed in some magnificent, but to common minds utterly incomprehensible manner, by the master hand of Robert Bootefish, chief butler, head clerk and precentor of Merry-Mount. Apart from the rest, and very near the master of revels, sat an extremely handsome young man, of an elegance of person and demeanor totally distinguishing him from the principal part of the company. Squatted upon their hams within the ample fire-place, were the two Indians whom the reader has seen in the first chapter, and who were grunting to each other occasionally, in some nondescript gutturals, which they evidently mistook for language, in a very boosy and dignified manner.

"Robin Bootefish," said the suzerain, addressing the reader's

old acquaintance, "thou deservest to be installed forever as chief priest of the fountain of Merry-Mount. You are aware, Master Maudsley," continued he, turning to the young man who sat on his right, "you are aware that there are many fountains of rare and curious merit in this wilderness; so that the future Moses who shall lead the Puritans to this Canaan, will need to smite no rock for their water."

"Truly, Master Morton," answered the young gentleman, "the fountain presided over by your butler and friend, Robert Bootjack ———."

"Bootefish, your honor," interposed the worthy butler with calm dignity.

"A thousand pardons, Robert Bootefish," resumed Maudsley, "is a fountain of quite sufficient merit to find in the wilderness, and one quite equal to assuage the thirst of all the Puritans of New Canaan. But of what other fountains do you speak?"

"Marry at Winnesimit," answered Morton, "is a fountain of wonderful virtue for the fair sex. 'T is said and proved that one glass cures the most obstinate barrenness; so that we may be sure, if the place ever comes to be settled, 't will be blessed with a most redundant population."

"A fountain haunted not by Egeria, but Lucina," said Maudsley; "and to what others do you allude?"

"Next, and in this neighborhood," replied Morton, "over at Squanto's chapel yonder, is a fountain of a most remarkable power; for its waters cause a dead sleep of forty-eight hours to those who drink forty-eight ounces at a draught, and so on proportionably." *

"And are you chymist enough to solve the mystery of its waters?" asked Maudsley.

"No, truly," said the Lord of Merry-Mount, "unless it be that the Puritans of Plymouth have buried their oldest and most

* See Note II.

soporific sermons within the grave of their honored and red-legged friend Squantum, who is entombed there. But, whatever be the cause, the fact is unquestionable. The great Powahs were accustomed to go thither to drink of the fountain, and when filled with its inspiration they would astonish their disciples with the multitude and magnificence of their visions. But after all, as you say, Master Maudsley, the fountain of Merry-Mount for me. The worst crime that the brethren can find in me is my merriment; but by Jupiter, 't is a complaint they will never catch, however contagious. So what harm can I do their saintships?"

"Truly you seem to be a martyr indeed, Master Morton," said Maudsley; "and, considering that the brethren have no more jurisdiction over your territory than the Khan of Tartary, one would think they might let you alone."

"And so they might; for, as you say, the devil a bit of territory does their patent, which they have got at last, give to them north of yonder river of Wessaguscus. But my noise and my mirth offends them, it seems — s'death, have they ever inquired whether their gravity offendeth me or not? What would they say, think you, should I issue a proclamation from this my palace of Merry-Mount, forbidding all prophesying at Plymouth — cutting of all anthems, and putting them upon a rigid allowance of sermons, say one yard to the hour?"

"Why, I think they would be very likely," answered Maudsley, "to send your herald back to you abridged of his ears."

"And yet I have as much lawful jurisdiction over them, as they over the sovereign of Merry-Mount; and in the eye of reason and equity I should be more justifiable than themselves. Is not mirth more philosophical than tears? A plague on their doleful dumps. You are a scholar, Master Maudsley — what says our friend Horatius Flaccus on this point?

'Misce stultitiam consiliis brevem.'"

"Yes indeed," says Maudsley, to the infinite satisfaction of Morton, adding the concluding line of the ode, —

'Dulce est desipere in loco.'

So pass round the tankard, Master Morton — the jaws of Bootefish are gaping like a stranded codfish."

"How can I express my delight to you, most excellent young man," cried Morton, almost falling upon Maudsley's neck. "You know not how I pine in these illiterate deserts for a companion skilled in the humanities. Saving and excepting the grim Sir Christopher, who is a scholar as he is every thing else on the earth beneath, there is no human being to consort with me who has read the first book of Horace, or knows it from the first of Chronicles. Truly, like the clown in the wilderness, in worthy Will Shakspeare's comedy, do I resemble that most capricious poet, honest Ovid, among the Goths. Judge, then, of my delight in meeting with you in the wilderness."

"Master Maudsley's health," cried the worthy butler, taking a mighty pull at the tankard, wiping the froth from his beard and handing it to his neighbor.

"Master Maudsley's health," said the gentleman with the roast-apple physiognomy, plunging his face into the flagon, and becoming so immersed, either in the fluid or profound thought, that he forgot to take it out again till the tankard was dry.

"I say, Peter Cakebread, none of that," said the lengthy individual with the cap and feather, taking up the empty flagon, and ringing it discontentedly upon the table, — "I never saw such a pump. The suction of your skinny varlets passeth indeed. Robin Bootefish, I'll trouble thee to supply the tank again. After Cakebread, 't is nobody's turn, thou knowest, till that be done. Why Peter, the Red Sea would be nothing to thee — and thou might'st drink it up for the new Canaanites to pass over, dry shod."

"Yes," said the gentleman addressed, with his little beady eyes, glittering like a toad's upon his brown, wrinkled face. "I thank my stars that I can look to the bottom of a tankard through all obstacles. But thou art mighty scriptural, Humphrey Rednape; anybody can see that thou hast not sojourned at Plymouth for nothing. Marry thou hast lent an ear to the brethren indeed."

The face of the lengthy individual, who had left an ear upon the Plymouth pillory, was suffused with passion in an instant at the phrase. Clapping his hat still more firmly upon the side of his head, and shaking his clenched fist at the speaker, he vociferated, —

"Peter Cakebread, have a care — if thou canst swallow every thing, marry so cannot I. Another such cowardly allusion to a ———."

As the unfortunate Rednape was chafing under the gibes of the unpitying Cakebread, the replenished tankard was placed before him, and, without more ado, he buried his face and his rage together in the comforting fluid, seeking to drown the voice of his savage tormentor. As his countenance emerged from the tankard after a very satisfactory and refreshing pull, the taunting voice of Cakebread, repeating his mockery, struck on his solitary ear, and again awakened his wrath.

"Take that, thou malicious old baboon, to stop thy infernal chattering," roared he, dashing the flagon full in his enemy's face, and then hurling the flagon itself at his head.

Cakebread escaped with the shower bath, for, ducking his head with agility, he avoided the huge missile, which would have assuredly put an end to his joking, if it had hit the mark at which with hearty good-will it was aimed.

His countenance, when he again ventured to lift it from the table, was sloppy and woe-begone enough; but the malice of his beady eyes was not quite extinguished.

"Hallo! — What is all this?" cried Morton, rapping upon

the table with the hilt of his dagger. "Rednape — Cakebread — what mean ye by these quarrels and cuffings? Cannot ye indulge in the good things provided by my paternal care, without riot?

'Natis in usum lætitiæ scyphis
Pugnare, Thracum est,'

which in the vernacular is, 'None but blackguards break heads with the jolly tankard' — so hold your tongues, and give ear to my counsel."

"He has but one to give," muttered the incorrigible Cakebread, but in so low a tone that it escaped the attention of Rednape.

"And what is to become of us, I should like to be informed?" chirped the Canary Bird, hopping off his stool, and running to pick up the fallen flagon — "what is to become of us, I ask? Here be these twain — Rednape and Cakebread — have consumed the lining of two tankards, and the devil a drop have the rest of us to wet our whistles withal."

"Get on thy perch again, Canary," said the master of the revels, and shut thy bill; Bootefish shall administer to thy wants. Robert, be lively, man."

"Certainly, if your honor commands," said that important personage; "but if I had my own way, not another drop should be set on the table for a quarter of an hour. A pretty thing, forsooth, if I, Robert Bootefish, butler, precentor, and head clerk, am to do nothing but run to and fro, at the command of these wasteful vagabonds. If the good liquor, prepared by these skilful hands, had gone to its lawful and proper place, never a word would I say; but when I see these roystering sots sprinkling each other's heads like cabbages, and as if the flagon were a watering-pot, I will take it upon me to pronounce them worse than Indians, or pagans, or heathen Puritans themselves."

"Well, well, old puncheon," chirped the impatient Doryfall, do n't grumble any more, but stir thy stumps and the liquor. I am as dry as an exhortation; I shall evaporate unless thou wettest me. Life is dust, but the clay must be moistened — so get along, old hogshead."

"Take care I don't wring thy neck, Master Canary, and spoil thy drinking forever," said the irascible Bootefish, feeling his dignity invaded, but stumping solemnly off in search of the desired liquor.

"My name is Bernaby Doryfall, and a very good name too," piped the good-humored Canary Bird, "but call me what thou likest, so thou starvest us not. To the health and long life of Master Maudsley," concluded he, thrusting his bill into the tankard which the chief butler soon placed upon the table.

The toast and tankard went round, and then other toasts and other tankards went round and round again. The mirth grew loud and furious. Songs to which nobody listened, glees of discordant and unhappy sound, and catches in which every thing was caught but the tune, succeeded each other in bewildering and still increasing confusion. Faster and faster flew the flagon, louder and louder grew the uproar, thicker and thicker rose the unceasing tobacco smoke, till it hung all over them like a thick grey fog, through which the pine torches wildly flashed and flared. It was a picture of wildly contrasted light and shadow, that evening scene of frantic revelry. That strange, rude banquet, that roughly raftered and uncouth apartment, those parti-colored and half savage costumes, those swart and bearded faces now flashing with fierce laughter, now black with sudden anger, now softening with drunken tenderness, were worthy of a Caravaggio's pencil.

Maudsley sat in his place, a spectator, not an actor in the merriment. He went to the window and looked forth, and then returned to contemplate the scene. The uproar sounded un-

naturally in that wilderness-spot, the frequent oath, the ribald jest, the deafening and incessant song, and shout, and yell, broke strangely forth upon the solemn night — rang through the stern and mirky forest, and awoke but to overpower the hooting owl, and the howling wolf, with the wilder and more discordant notes of humanity.

"Are these the men," said Maudsley to himself, "are these the men to found an empire? Are these the pioneers of civilization and Christianity in this benighted but virgin world? By such ribalds as these are colonies torn from the parent trunk, and planted in the wilderness to blossom and grow strong?"

While he was musing, the storm had increased without, and now howled fearfully around the quaking house, the rain beat in torrents upon the roof, while the uproar of the elements seemed but to add fresh excitement to the furious riot of that revelling crew within.

Suddenly a faint knocking was heard at the outer door. "A visitor, and at this time of night, and in this foul weather too!" exclaimed Morton. "Bootefish, to the door, man, and admit the wanderer."

"Please your honor's worship," replied the chief butler, very reluctant to disturb himself, "'tis none of our own company, 'tis probably some tipsy heathen of an Indian or vagrant Puritan."

"Robert Bootefish," interrupted Morton, with a solemn, theatrical, but slightly tipsy expression, "it is a night, as the worthy deer stealer of Stratford hath it,

> 'Wherein the cubdrawn bear would crouch,
> The lion and the belly pinched wolf
> Keep their fur dry ——.'"

"Aye," interrupted Maudsley in his turn, "and yet perhaps as for this poor devil,

> 'Unbonneted he runs.'

But the wanderer to night, unbonneted or unbreeched, sachem, or settler, powah or Puritan, shall dry his fur at yonder fire, while I can undo the latch;" and with this the good-natured youth anticipated the slow movements of Bootefish, and threw the door open. "Who knocks," cried he, for not a soul was visible in the pitchy darkness.

"Lo, it is I, a wanderer in the wilderness," answered a feeble voice near the door.

"Come in, wanderer of the wilderness, and shut the door after thee," roared the jolly voice of the suzerain. "Come to the hospitable hearth of Merry-Mount — *dissolve frigus* — and take a pull at the Bootefish panacea — come in man — why, excellent well," concluded he, as Maudsley introduced a slender, middle aged individual, in sad colored Puritanic habiliments, faded, patched, and travel stained, who advanced bashfully through the horde of revellers, till he arrived at the ample fireplace, where he stood, in most dismally drenched condition, with the water dripping from his thin peaked beard, oozing from every corner of his dress, and running like a little rivulet from the top of the tall hat which he held in his hand.

"Welcome to Merry-Mount, most worthy wanderer," said Morton, "and pray whom have I the honor of addressing?"

The thin, half drowned little man looked bewildered enough, being thus suddenly brought from the wild and stormy darkness without, into the glaring, hot, and fantastic scene, where he now stood, a most striking and almost pathetic contrast to the other actors of the scene. For a moment he seemed to have lost the faculty of speech.

"Take a drop of this fluid," said Bootefish, officially waddling forward with his tankard, "mayhap it may loosen the rust from that tongue of yours, if so be you have a tongue, and have'nt worn it to a stump with preaching and prophecying."

The Puritan put his lips meekly to the tankard, moistened his

throat with a very little of the liquid, and then looked wistfully at the company around him, with much the same sort of expression, which a kid might wear at being suddenly introduced to a select circle of hyenas.

"Might I again solicit information touching thy baptismal and patronymic denominations?" said Morton. "In other words, might I again ask thy name? Zounds, man, don't look as if we were all rattlesnakes — who art thou?"

"Lo! it is I, a poor worm and not a man, a reproach of men and despised of the people," at last answered the wanderer in a plaintive voice.

"And that, I suppose, we are to consider a most lucid explanation of your appearance and present position," said Morton. "Well, well, sit down by the fire, dry your hide, and take another pull at the jorum."

"How the poor worm, as he calls himself, wriggles and twists," said Peter Cakebread to the Canary Bird. "Zounds, I think some of the fishers of men down at new Canaan have thrust a hook through him, and thrown him as a bait among us here. Don't expect to catch an old sinner like me, Master worm of the wilderness," concluded the brown faced, beady-eyed Peter, addressing himself to the Puritan.

"Nonsense, Peter Cakebread," answered the Canary Bird, "don't suppose he comes angling for such slippery old eels as you — your're half singed already in the devil's frying pan. But look at the blushing Bootefish yonder, hang me, if he does not look at the bait longingly, he is growing serious. Halloo, Bootefish, take care, man — let not our precentor and head clerk give attention to the wiles of the artful enemy — no nonconformity at Merry-Mount, you know. The liturgy and good liquor for ever!"

"Am I not precentor and head clerk of Merry-Mount, I presume to ask," said Bootefish, reddening with importance. "Do

I not convert the heathen Turk and Pagan Indian? Well then, why not the heathen Puritan also? I shall catechise this stray crop ear and illuminate his darkness, always with the leave of your honor's worship," concluded he, looking towards Master Morton.

"Certainly, Robin, certainly," said the master of the revels, whose delight it was to indulge his subjects in all their whims, and to keep them merry and good natured; "make as many proselytes as thou canst, but my life for it, thou'lt find a Puritan more stiff necked than a sagamore, but far be it from me to discourage your virtuous efforts."

In the meantime the poor wanderer, who evidently seemed to feel himself more uncomfortable among these mad and riotous vagabonds, than he had done amid the raging tempest and the midnight gloom, from which he had recently emerged, sat by the fire, his hands meekly clasped, his eyes piously elevated, and an inaudible prayer upon his lips.

"Take this cloak, old fellow, and cast off that drenched and tattered garment of yours," said Maudsley, bringing a warm cloak of ample dimensions, and wrapping it snugly about the poor pilgrim's shivering form.

"Thanks, most worthy youth," said the wanderer, looking gratefully into the face of the young man, in whose physiognomy alone, of all the strange faces which surrounded him, he seemed to read sympathy and protection. "Truly my garments are not of the driest, for lo! I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

"Then," began Bootefish, with oracular gravity, "then, thou perverse contemner of the holy mother church — then, thou apostate from her, who would have suckled thee with her wings, and sheltered thee in the shadow of her paps — then, if thy bones are out of joint, here am I, Robin Bootefish, to put them

all in again, with the help of my blessed exhortations," and with this, the veteran plucked a greasy little prayer-book, very tattered and liquor stained, from his pocket, opened it at hap hazard, and holding it upside down, began piously to con it inaudibly, but with apparently great self-edification.

While this drunken foolery was going on, Maudsley and Morton, something weary of the folly, and who wished some private conversation, had retired into the adjoining apartment, the suzerain having appointed Peter Cakebread to officiate in his absence.

The rioting and folly went on still more madly, now that the restraint of their superiors was removed from the rest of the revellers.

"Now wanderer and worm of the wilderness!" exclaimed Peter Cakebread, flinging his thin, spider legs upon the table, and then taking a mighty pull at the flagon, "now thou drunken miscreant with the melted bowels, and the broken bones, please inform this righteous and pious company thy name, location, and destination — answer, and at once, Croppy, on pain of my instantaneous displeasure.

"My name," answered the Puritan meekly, "is Mellowes — Faintnot Mellowes. I was some time an unworthy weaver of Suffolkshire, in Old England — now a pilgrim in the land of Canaan, and a sojourner in New Plymouth. I am journeying to Naumkeak upon urgent business; after which I look intently to return to my helpmeet and my blessed babes, whom I have left in the wilderness."

"A home in the wilderness," said Bootefish, waving his prayer-book solemnly to and fro — a home in the wilderness, where the altars of the blessed mother church are to be overthrown before they are set up. Alas, for this benighted land! Listen to me, thou apostate, to me Robert Bootefish, — for am I not a babe still hanging on the refreshing bosom of the mother church?"

"Lord bless him! Thou canst see the cherub was born for hanging," interrupted Cakebread. "Don't blush, Bootefish," concluded he, with his toad-like eyes glittering with mischief, while the solemn Bootefish grew purple with indignation at this interference with his exhortations.

"Hah, hah, hah," suddenly roared the sprawling, long-legged Humphrey Rednape, who had been silently imbibing vast draughts from the Merry-Mount fountain, and who had been placidly contemplating the gambols of his companions, without any active participation therein.—"Hah, hah, hah," he roared with ringing, drunken laughter—"Bootefish a cherub!—a capital jest, 'ifecks!—Bootefish, a blessed cherub! Hah, hah, hah!"

"Halloo, halloo—here is Rednape waked up at last," piped the shrill voice of Canary—"I thought he had got a bottle of Squanto's fountain, and was dead to the world for eight and forty hours! But here he is alive and kicking, and laughing too from ear to ear at Bootefish's exhortations."

"What an extensive hilarity must that be!" cried the reinstated Cakebread—"Rednape laughing from ear to ear! Why, 't is a laugh forty miles broad, as the crow flies—since from Merry-Mount to Plymouth———."

"Hold thy peace, hold thy peace!" cried the peace-making Bernaby Doryfall, stopping the mouth of the malicious Cakebread; while the luckless Rednape, with his merriment changed to wrath by the jibes of his ceaseless tormentor, was looking round the table for some suitable missile of revenge—"Hold thy foolish tongue, Peter; and thou Humphrey Rednape, stop thy rash hand. Here are we all, forgetting the business in hand. Here, Faintnot Mellowes," continued he, turning to the poor weaver, who had kept his seat in the chimney corner, shrinking as far as possible from observation, and hoping that the attention of his riotous companions would, by their own bickering, be directed altogether from himself, at least till the anxiously desired

re-appearance of Master Maudsley — "Here, Master Faintnot Mellowes, some time weaver, and now an unworthy brother of Plymouth, I propose, as thou hast forsworn connection with New Canaan, as thou hast thyself informed us, although the reasons are not yet communicated, — that thou be now admitted a member of the Merry-Mount society, with the customary ceremonies."

The suggestion of Bernaby Doryfall was received with shouts of applause by the drunken crew. The luckless Faintnot was dragged from the chimney corner, by the united exertions of Rednape, Bootefish, and the Canary Bird, and elevated, chair and all, upon the table, where he sat, presenting, with his peaked hat, draggled dress, and rueful countenance, an extraordinary contrast to the wild, bacchanalian figures who surrounded him. There he sat pilloried upon the centre of the table, mocked and tormented by the grinning imps, who were dancing, whooping, and chattering in mad and noisy confusion about the table.

Suddenly Bernaby Doryfall, with a shrill halloo, leaped like a frog upon the table just behind his chair, placed both hands upon the victim's shoulders, and vaulted over him in masterly style, only upsetting half a score of pewter mugs and flagons as he descended, and making an infernal clatter as he reached the ground. He was followed by the temporary master of revels, the wizzened, little old Cakebread, who took the leap with the nimbleness of an ape, mopping and mowing at the Puritan as he flew over him, and alighting upon the ground with a malicious chuckle of triumph. The sprawling Rednape succeeded, who, after clearing the victim's shoulders in rather a clumsy manner, floundered upon his nose, among the cups and dishes, nearly upset the table, and then measured his length upon the floor. His cap and feather fell off as he did so, his long hair fell back, and exposed the mutilated portion of his countenance to the derision of his companions. The clumsy Bootefish followed, who

with great difficulty was hoisted upon the table by the assistance of his companions, and who, after waddling with ponderous but uncertain footing a step or two forward, with the air of an intoxicated hippopotamus, came to a dead pause, refused the leap, closed his eyes, gathered himself into a ball, and dropped heavily upon the floor. The game was kept up, however, with breathless rapidity by the Canary Bird, Peter Cakebread and Rednape, with one or two other subordinate and anonymous individuals; the ceremony being concluded by the active Cakebread, who turned half a dozen cart wheels upon the table, and then threw a final somerset over Faintnot's head, in most brilliant and inimitable style.

The company now refreshed themselves with another pull at the Merry-Mount fountain. Master Bootefish then stepped forward with bland dignity, presented the flagon to the poor badgered victim, and requested him to drink it off to the health of the Merry-Mount society. The meek weaver declined the draught; whereat the chief butler, in great dudgeon, drank off the larger portion himself, and threw the slops over the prisoner's head.

"Thou art sprinkled now from the fountain of Merry-Mount," said he solemnly, "and we propose that thou shouldst henceforth become a member of this honorable society."

"Alas, alas!" cried the almost exhausted and thoroughly bewildered Faintnot, who really believed himself in the power of demons, and the whole scene before him one of witchcraft and delusion; "alas, alas! the dogs have compassed me — the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me. Is there none to help me? No, not one."

"Did I hear aright?" blustered Bootefish. "Dogs compass you, indeed! and a wicked assembly, too! Why, thou canting, heathen dog, dost dare to call the worshipful and virtuous society of Merry-Mount a wicked assembly! Thou roystering, drunken

knave thou, how shall such insolence be punished? Humphrey Rednape, Peter Cakebread, Bernaby Doryfall, — are ye all an assembly of the wicked? What vengeance shall we inflict upon this perverse slanderer?"

Faintnot looked wistfully towards the door, and with bewilderment and fear at the threatening faces of his tormentors.

"Alas, alas!" he again exclaimed, "is there none to save me from the power of the dog? Whither is the kind young man departed, and where is he, who sat but lately in authority over ye? Shame on ye! — shame, that ye should wear the semblance of men, and yet be as fiends and ravening wolves to destroy and persecute the helpless and the unoffending. Put me forth again, I beseech ye, if ye indeed be men, and not fiends; put me forth again into the tempest and the outer darkness, and the Lord, even the God of Jacob, shall reward ye."

"Put thee forth again into this terrible storm!" piped the Canary Bird, "how canst thou think it? What a blot upon the hospitable fame of Merry-Mount; and sooth to say, thou judgest of the free hearted revellers of Passanogessit as of the gloomy crop-ears of New Canaan. No, my good fellow, not yet shalt thou be dismissed into the wailing and teeth-gnashing of the outer wilderness. Pledge us to the prosperity of Passanogessit, and to the confusion of Canaan!" he concluded, again tendering the oft-rejected flagon.

The poor Puritan reached the cup with evident loathing to his lips, and looked beseechingly, as he exclaimed in broken accents, —

"Truly, trouble is near me, and there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me, — strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. Men, men, have ye no pity — no charity — no bowels of compassion? Behold, my soul and body are wearied with travel and fasting. Is there none to save me from the lion's mouth? Is there no help from the horns of the unicorns?"

"Hah, hah, hah!" shouted the baboon-faced Cakebread. "Hah, hah, hah! Master Humphrey, who would have thought that the sly dog of a Puritan psalm-singer had been an old acquaintance of thine. Why, man, he knows thy name as well as the best of us. Didst hear him pray for deliverance from unicorns? Can flesh and blood bear such gibes from a Puritan? Look at him well Humphrey, my lad, dost recognize an acquaintance? By the lord, perhaps 't is thy executioner himself. To him, to him! Numps, my lad. Quote him text for text; take an ear for an ear. Crop his ears for him on the spot, Numps, roundly and soundly — crop his ears for him, Humphrey Rednape, and thou shalt never be jeered again by Peter Cakebread!"

The long-legged unicorn sprang into the air with rapture at Cakebread's suggestion. His hatred of the Plymouth brethren was ancient, deep-rooted, savage, and not ungrounded. He had, as we have stated, been dealt with by the Puritans after the severest fashion. For the petty offence of reviling their magistrates and denying their authority, during a temporary and vagabond residence in their neighborhood, he had, according to their sanguinary practice, been pilloried, mutilated and banished. He had fled to Merry-Mount for refuge; where, during his long association with vagabonds of similar habits to his own, he had fed fat the grudge he owed the Plymouth people, and where his hatred had been burned indelibly into his soul by the ceaseless mockery of his companions. The opportunity for revenge, for which he had so long panted, seemed now within his grasp. Determined to wipe out the memory of his own ignominy by the heroic achievement artfully suggested by Cakebread, smarting under the memory of his own irremediable wrong, inflamed by the taunting laugh of his companions, furiously drunk, and blindly following the savage impulse of the moment, he whipped out his sharp hunting knife, sprang with a wild halloo upon the table, and seized the neck of the unoffending, unresisting weaver.

The rest of the drunken crew flocked around, encouraging and applauding his purpose. The savage Rednape, his eyes half starting from his head, his hands quivering with rage and intoxication, his mouth uttering ferocious imprecations, had already torn off the Puritan's hat and neck-band, had seized him by his right ear, with his knife brandished above him, when the victim, appalled by this ignominious cruelty, uttered a yell of horror, in so loud and piercing a tone, that even the executioner paused for an instant, while at the same moment the door flew violently open, and Henry Maudsley bounded into the room.

"What means this mummery?" he cried, in loud and angry tones, which rang through that riotous apartment, and infused a thrill of hope into the heart of the poor victim. Rednape paused a moment, holding his knife suspended in the air, and looked with an expression of cowardly ferocity, worthy of a vulture, disturbed when feeding upon a carcase, at the angry countenance of Maudsley.

"What means this mummery?" he repeated, looking fiercely at the mob of rioters. "Have ye no shame, no manly blood in your veins, that ye stand by, like grinning apes, while this drunken ruffian is playing such pranks as these? Leave your hold of his neck, Master Cut-throat, and let him descend from the place where you have pilloried him."

"Hey-day, hey-day, Master Maudsley!" exclaimed the ferocious Rednape, retaining his position upon the table, and his hold upon his victim's neck. "Hey-day! what is this exhortation about? Who gave you authority over me, or any of us, I should like to be informed? Death and damnation! here goes the psalm-singer's ear."

The victim struggled — the rioters cheered and yelled. Rednape brandished his knife, and would assuredly have executed his purpose, when Maudsley sprang upon him like a tiger, fastened his knuckles in his throat, and hurled him headlong and

sprawling upon the floor. Then turning to the wanderer, who was half dead with exhaustion, excitement and mortification, he humanely and carefully assisted him to descend from the ground, and led him off through the mob of rioters to the door. The revellers, confounded by his rapid and imperious style of proceeding, ashamed of their excesses, and feeling a little tardy sympathy with the persecuted pilgrim, offered but little resistance.

Soon after Maudsley had left the room with the weaver, whom he had taken under his protection, the sovereign of Merry-Mount entered, with marks of dissatisfaction upon his countenance.

"How is this, my children, my lieges," he cried, "how is this, that the back of your suzerain cannot for a moment be turned, but that his absence is a signal for riot and uproar? I am ashamed at your conduct. I have just been succinctly informed by Master Maudsley, — who is worth a hundred of ye, 'homo ad unguem factus'— a gentleman and a scholar, who has the bard of Stratford at his tongue's end, and is as familiar with Flaccus as myself, — I say, I have just been informed that outrages have been attempted upon the person of this poor wayfarer which are shocking to an ingenuous mind. I would blush for ye, but that I see Robert Bootefish is blushing for the whole company. Retire, the whole of ye! 'T is long past midnight; the butt is dry, the torches are burnt to the sockets, and ye are all as tipsy as wild boars."

As he concluded this oration, the despotic lord of Merry-Mount opened wide the door, and his obedient subjects, very drunk and very much ashamed, trooped forth, helter-skelter, into the darkness, bearing lighted torches in their hands, and looking, as their wild figures broke vividly and fitfully upon the midnight gloom, like a horde of gnomes about to vanish into the bowels of the earth.

The rain had ceased, but the darkness still continued. Morton watched at the door till the party had dispersed into the various cabins which were inclosed within the palisade. He then sallied forth personally, to examine the security of his outer defences, and having completed his rounds, returned into his house.

In the mean time, Maudsley, who had taken the poor weaver in charge, had conducted him to his own cottage, where he had spread before him a supper of dried venison and Indian bread, and had then insisted upon his reposing his weary limbs upon his own couch, which, notwithstanding the protestations of the humble Faintnot, he resolutely resigned to him.

The weary wanderer was soon enjoying the slumber which he so much needed, while Maudsley, lost in thought, remained gazing out upon the starless night. Feeling a little chilled as he stood by the open door, he turned and took up the cloak, which he had so good-naturedly thrown about the wanderer, upon his first appearance at the banqueting hall of the palace. As he he lifted the garment from the heap of tattered raiment, which the wearer had cast from him upon retiring to rest, a sealed letter fell upon the ground. He mechanically took it up, and looked at the superscription. The packet was addressed, "To the honored hands of Esther Ludlow. —— These with dispatch." He gazed at the writing, till the waning light of the torch expired, and left him in darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BAFFLED KNIGHT.

When Sir Christopher Gardiner lifted the prostrate form of Esther Ludlow from the ground, and bore her to the house, he was not aware to whose prompt assistance the preservation of the maiden was owing. He had from a distance observed the danger to which she was exposed, but having unluckily no fire-arm, he was unable to rescue her immediately, and was rushing down the slope to attack her enemy with his dagger, when Maudsley's bullet laid the ferocious animal lifeless at Esther's feet. Annoyed at being thus prevented from rendering a signal service to the fair Puritan, he did not pause to investigate the circumstances of the case, but while Maudsley was struggling through the swamp, which intervened between Esther's position and the point from which he had fired, and while his form was still concealed by the bushes, the knight had rapidly raised the fainting girl in his arms, and borne her to her home.

When Maudsley arrived, he was somewhat surprised to find the unknown damsel, whom he had rescued, thus spirited away, and his first impulse was to search for her. He observed, however, but very indistinctly, the figure of a man in puritanic habiliments, disappearing through the pine forest, and he then remembered, that in the neighborhood of this spot, which he had never before visited, was the residence of several religious settlers. The society of such people was not congenial to him. The only Puritan for whom, in the whole breadth of New England, he had the faintest sensation of sympathy, the Puritan who seemed to hold the thread of his fate in her hands, although

she had, in his estimation, slighted and scorned him — that Puritan was, as he believed, many miles away in the settlement of New Plymouth. He had been but a short time in New England, and he had not yet chosen to visit the Ludlows in their retreat. It was partly shame at being obliged to acknowledge the weakness of his heart, partly doubt, whether his presence might be pleasing or not, and partly a lingering feeling of resentment, which had restrained him from flying across the narrow strip of wilderness, which as he deemed still separated them, even as he had already traversed the stormy and wintry Atlantic.

Supposing the Ludlows some sixty miles distant, he, of course, could hardly associate the idea of his Esther with the damsel whom, concealed by bushes and dimmed by distance, he had seen encountering the wolf, and when he arrived at the spot, and found that she had been carried away in safety by a man of her own faith, her father, husband, brother, lover, he cared not which, he was on the whole rather gratified than otherwise. He thought, to be sure, that it would have been rather more courteous, had the Puritan gentleman stayed till his arrival, but he reflected that their rapid retreat had probably saved him from listening to a thanksgiving, concluding with an exhortation, which would have been too long for his patience, and he felt grateful for their departure. As we have seen, he mused a little on the circumstances, and then dismissing the whole matter from his thoughts, he went his way.

In the mean time Gardiner had borne Esther Ludlow to her house, where he found her brother. He was somewhat alarmed at the situation of his sister, but the explanation of Gardiner satisfied him, that there was no danger to be apprehended, and the exertions of a faithful waiting woman, whom Esther had brought with her from England, having very soon restored her exhausted senses, he pressed Gardiner to remain at his house for the

present. He had occasionally seen the knight at Plymouth; where he was regarded as a man weary of the world, a man who had led a life perhaps of adventure and of passion, but whose spirit was now changed, and who had as it were taken the cowl, and gone into the wilderness as into a convent, where he might atone, during the rest of his days, for the follies of his worldly career.

"And it is to your prompt assistance then," said Esther, who was now perfectly restored, and who felt almost ashamed of having had the weakness to faint — "it is to your assistance that I am indebted for deliverance," said she, suppressing a slight shudder, and addressing herself to Gardiner.

"Alas! no," he replied; "I was about to render you assistance, which would have been a very easy as well as a most welcome task, but even as I was hastening towards you, an unknown hand from a distant thicket, Roger Conant's, perhaps, or that of some other of your neighbors, anticipated my intention and destroyed your enemy. No great achievement to be sure, for the wolf is a cowardly cur, and would certainly not have waited for my arrival, before taking himself to flight, even if this unknown champion had been absent."

"It is strange," said Esther, "that the man to whose prompt assistance I am so much indebted, should not at least present himself at our cottage. Was Roger Conant at his own hut, Walter," she inquired, turning to Ludlow.

"No, he had been absent since daybreak — and there was none about his household who knew whither — I think it likely that it was he who assisted you, and I hope I shall soon have an opportunity, if it be so, to offer him my warmest thanks."

"If it be Conant," said Esther, "you may be sure that he will absent himself, to avoid our thanks. Such an every-day matter as destroying a wolf, he will hardly deem a matter of triumph."

"He were a more savage brute himself," exclaimed Gardiner with enthusiasm, and looking with flashing eyes at Esther, "he were worse than a wolf himself, did he not triumph in being the chosen instrument to rescue so precious and cherished a life from the threatening danger — I would it had been my lot instead of his. But Providence decreed otherwise," he concluded, slightly elevating his eyes to heaven, and fearing that his manner might have expressed more warmth than would be acceptable.

"I thank you for your kindness," said Esther, "and I certainly do not forget, that your arm was ready and willing to preserve me, even if no other assistance had been near."

"Have you received news from England?" asked Gardiner, turning abruptly to Ludlow.

"I am expecting dispatches by the way of Plymouth," was the reply. "There has been an arrival in that harbor, and one too, by which important news have come to hand. My own letters, which would have been addressed to me at Plymouth, are, I trust, already on their way across the intervening wilderness, but I am not yet in possession of them."

"You are not yet aware of any details," said Gardiner, "but I think I understand you to state, that you have learned already something of importance."

"Truly," said Ludlow, "of much interest to me, and to you likewise."

"Appertaining to affairs at home, or regarding our own matters here in the wilderness?" asked Gardiner.

"They regard ourselves, our own colony and prospects," said Ludlow.

"And our oppressed religion no doubt?" added Gardiner, "but I am anxious to know something more — I too am entirely without advices, and pray you to impart to me whatever you have learned."

"Briefly then," said Ludlow, "I am informed that a new, serious effort is making to colonize these parts, by people of a wholly different stamp from those who have hitherto attempted the enterprise."

"Differing from our brethren of New Plymouth, I apprehend you to mean," said Gardiner.

"Truly," said Ludlow, "I did not so intend, although, to be sure, the new colonists are different in many of their principles from the brethren of New Plymouth. As I understand, they are such who retain still a deep and yearning affection for our holy mother church, and who would see her reclaimed from her errors, and purified of her Popish gewgaws. Like my sister and yourself and me, they would still remain in communion and sweet fellowship with their ancient mother, and not like the Separatists of Plymouth, tear themselves too rudely from her arms, and fiercely refuse holy intercourse with her."

"In short," said Esther, who felt a deeper and livelier interest than her brother in these matters, "in short, the new comers are said to be rather Puritans than Separatists. They are nonconformists, who seek to establish a purified church on this side the ocean. Separated by the mighty Atlantic, from the land of their fathers, they would not separate in heart and spirit from the church of their affection — but only wipe away the stain of its errors from their own garments."

"They are then Puritans, these new comers?" said Gardiner, with apparent calmness, but with a savage scowl for an instant darkening his forehead.

"They are so," said Esther, answering his question, and not observing the expression of his face. "But my brother meant, when he called them men of a different stamp from the former settlers in this wilderness, that they differed widely from the idle and dissolute, who have sought these shores, not for conscience sake, but in the sordid hope of gain and worldly advantage."

"Let us not speak of them," said Gardiner, "but of the new comers. You say they are Puritans and not Separatists — can you tell me by what right they come into this neighborhood?"

"We have not yet, as my brother has mentioned, learned the details, but we hear that a company of pious and energetic people has been formed, numbering among them many men of station and fortune, and that this company has obtained from the council of New England, a grant of the whole territory of Massachusetts Bay."

"Aha," muttered Gardiner to himself, grinding his teeth savagely, and looking black as a demon, upon the madonna face of the beautiful Puritan, to whom he was listening. "Aha, then Sir Ferdinando has been baffled indeed. And pray can you inform me," added he aloud, and in the blandest tones, "can you inform me whether such a grant has actually been obtained, and the patent already executed?"

"Such is the story," answered Esther. "But if your own letters do not reach you sooner, I trust we shall soon be able to give you more ample information, when our messenger from New Plymouth shall have arrived."

"'T is very strange," muttered the knight to himself, "that I am left thus in the dark. Either Blaxton must have dispatches for me, or they have miscarried altogether. Sir Ferdinando could never have intended that I should be thus groping in ignorance of such important matters. I crave your pardon, lady," said he aloud, "for having given you so much trouble by my earnest desire for information. An exile, you know, as well as any other, thirsts for knowledge of affairs at home. I thank you for your kindness, and with your permission will now wish you good morrow." So saying, Sir Christopher courteously saluted Ludlow and his sister, passed rapidly across the glade, and disappeared in the forest.

"The knight seems troubled and disconcerted," said Ludlow to his sister, after their guest had departed.

"He seemed perplexed and strangely affected," answered Esther, "at the information which we have received from England — why his anxiety should be thus excited, I hardly know. 'T is a strange, moody man, whose mind seems to me as impenetrable as his visage. I know not why, but he inspires me with any thing but confidence."

"Nay, you judge him harshly," said Walter Ludlow; "Gardiner is, like myself, perhaps, a broken-spirited man, melancholy and solitary, but not therefore to be distrusted."

It is unnecessary to make further record of the Ludlows' conversation, as we have at this time more to do with the knight who had left the cottage.

CHAPTER VII.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL.

It was very natural that Sir Christopher Gardiner should have been exceedingly perplexed at the information which he had received, in such a fragmentary manner, from the Ludlows. He had received nothing by the recent arrival from England, and according to the tenor of his former letters, affairs had been in a very hopeful train for the advancement of his own plans.

Just previously to Gardiner's arrival in New England, Sir Ferdinando had meditated a great change in his schemes. His fertile imagination suggested to him, that one great obstacle to his success, lay in the New England Council — of which, although he was one of its most influential members, he was, after all, only a fraction, and consequently often hampered in his plans by want of sympathy, or by direct opposition on the part of his associates. Another difficulty with which he had to contend, lay in the instruments with which he had been obliged to work. He had been disappointed that he had been unable to inspire his son with any of his enthusiasm. The pictures which he painted to him did not dazzle him at all. But, while Sir Ferdinando was casting anxiously about him, and regretting that the character of his son altogether unfitted him from taking any part in his design, it so happened that circumstances took him to the continent, and he chanced one day to meet Sir Christopher Gardiner at Madrid. Circumstances which we have not yet time to explain, and an intimate connection with the Gorges family, which will probably develop itself more fully as this history proceeds, had made the elder and younger knights familiar

with each other. Gardiner had then but recently appeared, after nearly twenty years' absence in foreign climes, during which he had been disinherited. Strange adventures, in which he had been an actor, had from time to time been whispered in England. He had been a pilgrim to the Holy Land — he had been in many battles, by sea and land, and in the service of many states. He had dwelt long in Venice, that marble portal through which so long had flowed the commerce of the world, and dwelt there in some important, but mysterious capacity. It was certain that he had been engaged in the celebrated mock conspiracy of the Duke d'Ossuna against the Republic, in which the subordinates all lost their lives, while he preserved not only his head, but increased both his credit and his fortune. Disguised as a barefooted friar, he had repeatedly passed between Naples and Venice, without even exciting a suspicion; and throughout the whole drama, even to the explosion of the conspiracy, he had been the right hand and most trusty agent of the Duke, in all his daring, subtle, but unsuccessful schemes. At this juncture he had suddenly disappeared, as if the earth had swallowed him. And after men had done speculating, whether he had been sunk in the lagoons, or whether his friend, the Viceroy of the Sicilies, had popped him into the crater of Etna, to prevent any inconvenient blabbing, he had suddenly, after a long interval, re-appeared in England, which he had left a boy, and where no man knew his face. Some said he had not always borne the name he bore. Some whispered that there were potent reasons for disguise. That he had commanded a band of Uscoques, or Dalmatian pirates, was believed by some; while others were perfectly certain that he had distinguished himself in a memorable action, in which the gallies of the Knights of St. John had utterly routed and destroyed these scourges of the Adriatic. He was indeed generally believed to have been a Knight of Malta; and if so, he was probably not an Uscoque.

At the same time, it was currently reported that he had married an English woman of rank and fortune in Rome, and repudiated her soon afterward for a Cardinal's hat, with the Pope's triple crown in perspective. Missing the election to St. Peter's chair by a single vote, they said he had thrown down his hat in a rage, and had suddenly bolted to the East. Here he was known to have resided a long time, and was suspected by many wiseacres of having adopted the koran and the turban, and to have been rewarded with the pachalic over a dozen different provinces, whence he was only removed to occupy the station of grand vizier. Hence he was again driven, by a wild passion which the chief sultana conceived for him. Reciprocating the sentiment, but averse to the bowstring, he had made his escape with the assistance of the chief eunuch; and while the unfortunate Fatima was sinking to the bottom of the Bosphorus, he was heartlessly skimming across its surface in the swiftest of feluccas. The thread of his adventures was snapped again at this moment; but the wiseacres, tracking him like bloodhounds, came up some how or other with him in Spain, where he had gone to visit his friend, the Duke d'Ossuna, who had returned to his country and made his peace at court. Thence, people said he had been startled by the unlooked for appearance of his wife, who, after dodging him through all his windings, from Venice through the Cardinal's college to the Levant, and so across the Mediterranean to Spain, had suddenly confronted him in the Escurial. Giving her the slip, he appeared to have found the seven-leagued boots, and to have dashed off again to the world's end. The wiseacres were once more baffled.

A little only of the nonsense which had been talked about him, may indicate the estimation in which he had at one time been held, and even shadow forth the probable character of the man about whom so much mysterious folly had been engendered. And yet there were undoubtedly a good many truths mixed with

the absurd gossip which was so greedily swallowed. This history may probably eliminate the real from the fanciful; — but at present we are only concerned to account for his intimacy with Sir Ferdinando Gorges. That doughty old knight, and most brilliant of schemers, almost fainted upon Gardiner's neck when he discovered him. He had known him long and well; and without stating at present the precise relation in which they stood, let it suffice, that never were two persons better adapted to be useful and serviceable to each other. Gardiner was very ready to recommence his adventures on a new scene. His battered fortunes, he thought, would be admirably recruited by the creation of a magnificent county palatine in the El Dorado; and his jaded imagination, palled by his varied and chequered adventures in the moss-grown world, where he had run his race, plumed her wings, and soared high again as the visions of a new empire in a virgin world flashed across him for the first time.

As for Sir Ferdinando, he probably knew how much to believe of the various adventures reported — not by Sir Christopher himself, however, for he was silent and impenetrable — of that adventurous personage. He cared not whether he was monk or martyr, Turk or Christian, Knight of Malta or Dalmatian pirate, cardinal, pope, or vizier. He knew his character thoroughly; — knew that no better man could possibly be found in the breadth of England for his purposes. Trained from boyhood to the use of every weapon, insensible to fatigue, calm in danger, subtle in scheming, prompt in action, commanding in person, and above all, untroubled with that inconvenient companion, a conscience, Sir Christopher seemed to have been expressly compounded for his great designs.

Gardiner's patience had however been severely tried. To a man of his impetuous nature, the languor which seemed to characterize all the proceedings of his English confederates

caused much annoyance, and the inactivity to which it doomed him became inexpressibly galling. Saving the society of Jaspar, and the occasional companionship of the suzerain of Merry-Mount, to which potentate he imparted just as much, or as little as he chose, of his own thoughts, his life was passed either in solitude or in masquerade.

Gardiner, however, possessed a deep knowledge of human nature, and reading Morton's character at a glance, he saw how much assistance might be derived from his various qualities and accomplishments, although his flippancy and recklessness caused him great uneasiness. In his intercourse with the brethren at Plymouth, whom he visited in the demure character of a spiritually-minded and contrite man, he had found how much irritation existed in the minds of those holy men at the madcap freaks of Morton and his ragamuffin subjects.

The news which Gardiner had just gathered was very perplexing. The vessel which brought the intelligence seemed to have arrived at Plymouth directly after his last visit to that place, and he now found that by hurrying away he had only gained an increase of anxiety. As the Ludlows informed him that a new company of Puritans had obtained a patent from the New England Council, it seemed pretty certain that Sir Ferdinando's efforts had been foiled, and that the contemplated dissolution of the New England Council and division of its territory was as far off as ever. This new movement disconcerted all his schemes. His plan, which to a sanguine and scheming nature like his, seemed not impracticable, of transferring the Plymouth company to Shawmut, to hold their territory — although that, of course, was to be kept a secret from them at present — under a grant from himself, when he should have become lord proprietor of the whole province; and of occupying all the important points upon the coast with colonists upon whom he could rely, required a considerable reinforcement in men,

money, and every kind of material from England. Concerning this matter he had repeatedly written to Sir Ferdinando, and he was anxiously expecting the arrival, during the summer, of at least a thousand picked men — fellows who had served abroad, and had been accustomed to a life of adventure — who were to be occupied in building fortifications at first, and afterwards in agriculture, fishing, and Indian trading.

Gardiner was at a loss how to act at present. Sir Ferdinando must have written to him, but his letters might be still at Plymouth; or they might have been intrusted to some messenger; or they might have been inclosed, as for particular reasons had sometimes been done, under cover to William Blaxton, the Solitary of Shawmut.

While the knight was ruminating upon these matters, the day was fast declining. At the moment when he had parted from the Ludlows, he had intended to proceed immediately to his boat, which he had moored in a little cove about a mile from their residence. Lost in meditation, however, he had loitered in the forest longer than he had intended, and he was aroused at last upon perceiving the almost level beams of the sun piercing through the mighty pines around. Finding, moreover, that his thoughts were occasionally wandering from the grave matters which immediately engaged his attention, to the marble brow and chiselled features of the beautiful Esther, he checked the vagrant current of his reflections, and hurried with a rapid and impatient step to the shore. He found his faithful Indian attendant seated in the boat, and wondering what had become of his master. Sketwarroes was an invaluable acquisition, which Gardiner had made in England. He had been one of a number of savages kidnapped in the south-eastern region of New England, by the infamous captain Hunt, and by him sold into slavery. He had been, however, rescued, brought to England, and protected by Sir Ferdinando Gorges, in whose service he had

remained several years; so that the English language being familiar to him, his services as an interpreter were very valuable to Gardiner, to whom his friend Sir Ferdinando had intrusted him.

The sun went down, as the little boat, spreading her light sail to a faint easterly breeze, slowly cleft her way across the purple waves. It was already dusk when the first great headland which interposes itself between Naumkeak and the outer promontory of Massachusetts Bay was rounded, and within an hour afterward it fell a flat calm, before a quarter of the little voyage had been completed.

After watching the stars till past midnight, and waiting in vain for the faintest breath of wind from any quarter of the horizon, Gardiner abandoned the helm to Sketwarroes, wrapped himself in his cloak, and stretched himself calmly to sleep in the bottom of the boat.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOLITARY OF SHAWMUT.

Upon the afternoon of that same day, a single figure sat upon the highest peak of the triple-headed promontory of Shawmut. Around him was spread the lovely panorama, which still, but with diminished beauty, surrounds the picturesque city of Boston.

A solitary figure sat upon the summit of Shawmut. He was a man of about thirty years of age, somewhat above the middle height, slender in form, with a pale, thoughtful face. He wore a confused, dark-colored, half canonical dress, with a grey broad-leaved hat strung with shells, like an ancient palmer's, and slouched back from his pensive brow, around which his prematurely grey hair fell in heavy curls, far down upon his neck. He had a wallet at his side, a hammer in his girdle, and a long staff in his hand. The hermit of Shawmut looked out upon a scene of winning beauty. The promontory resembled rather two islands than a peninsula, although it was anchored to the continent by a long slender thread of land, which seemed hardly to restrain it from floating out to join its sister islands, which were thickly strewn about the bay. The peak upon which the hermit sat, was the highest of the three cliffs of the peninsula; upon the south-east, and very near him, rose another hill of lesser height and more rounded form, and upon the other side, and towards the north, a third craggy peak presented its bold and elevated front to the ocean. Thus the whole peninsula was made up of three lofty crags. It was from this triple conformation of the promontory of Shawmut, that was derived the

appellation of Trimountain, or Tremont, which it soon afterwards received.

The vast conical shadows were projected eastwardly, as the hermit, with his back to the declining sun, looked out upon the sea.

The bay was spread out at his feet in a broad semicircle, with its extreme headlands vanishing in the hazy distance, while beyond rolled the vast expanse of ocean, with no spot of habitable earth beyond those outermost barriers, and that far distant fatherland, which the exile had left forever. Not a solitary sail whitened those purple waves, and saving the wing of the sea gull, which now and then flashed in the sunshine, or gleamed across the dimness of the eastern horizon, the solitude was at the moment unbroken by a single movement of animated nature. An intense and breathless silence enwrapped the scene with a vast and mystic veil. The bay presented a spectacle of great beauty. It was not that the outlines of the coast around it were broken into those jagged and cloud-like masses, that picturesque and startling scenery where precipitous crag, infinite abyss, and roaring surge unite to awaken stern and sublime emotions; on the contrary, the gentle loveliness of this transatlantic scene inspired a soothing melancholy, more congenial to the contemplative character of its solitary occupant. The bay secluded within its forest-crowned hills, decorated with its necklace of emerald islands, with its dark blue waters gilded with the rays of the western sun, and its shadowy forests of unknown antiquity, expanding into infinite depths around, was an image of fresh and virgin beauty, a fitting type of a new world, unadorned by art, unploughed by industry, unscathed by war, wearing none of the thousand priceless jewels of civilization, and unpolluted by its thousand crimes — springing, as it were, from the bosom of the ocean, cool, dripping, sparkling, and fresh from the hand of its Creator.

On the left, as the pilgrim sat with his face to the east, the outlines of the coast were comparatively low, but broken into gentle and pleasing forms. Immediately at his feet lay a larger island, in extent nearly equal to the peninsula of Shawmut, covered with mighty forest trees, and, at that day, untenanted by a human being — although but a short time afterwards it became the residence of a distinguished pioneer. Outside this bulwark, a chain of thickly wooded islets, stretched across from shore to shore, with but one or two narrow channels between, presenting a picturesque and effectual barrier to the boisterous storms of ocean. They seemed like naiads, those islets lifting above the billows their gentle heads, crowned with the budding garlands of the spring, and circling hand in hand, like protective deities about the scene.

On the south, beyond the narrow tongue of land, which bound the peninsula to the main, and which was so slender that the spray from the eastern side was often dashed across it into the calmer cove of the west, rose in the immediate distance, that long boldly broken, purple-colored ridge, called the Massachusetts, or Mount Arrow Head, by the natives, and by the first English discoverer baptized the Cheviot Hills.* On their left, and within the deep curve of the coast, were the slightly elevated heights of Passanogessit or Merry-Mount, and on their right stretched the broad forest, hill beyond hill, away. Towards the west and north-west, the eye wandered over a vast undulating panorama of gently rolling heights, upon whose summits the gigantic pine forests, with their towering tops piercing the clouds, were darkly shadowed upon the western sky, while in the dim distance, far above, and beyond the whole, visible only through a cloudless atmosphere, rose the airy summits of the Wachusett, Watatick, and Monadnock Mountains.

* See Note III.

Upon the inland side, at the base of the hill, the Quinobequin River, which Smith had already christened with the royal name of his unhappy patron, Charles, might be seen writhing in its slow and tortuous course, like a wounded serpent, till it lost itself in the blue and beautiful cove which spread around the whole western edge of the peninsula, and within the same basin, directly opposite the northern peak of Shawmut, advanced the bold and craggy promontory of Mishawum, where Walford, the solitary smith, had built his thatched and palisaded house. The blue thread of the River Mystic, which here mingled its waters with the Charles, gleamed for a moment beyond the heights of Mishawum, and then vanished into the frowning forest.

Such was the scene, upon a bright afternoon of spring, which spread before the eyes of the solitary William Blaxton, the hermit of Shawmut. It was a simple but sublime image, that gentle exile in his sylvan solitude. It was a simple but sublime thought which placed him and sustained him in his lone retreat. In all ages, there seem to exist men who have no appointed place in the world. They are before their age in their aspirations, above it in their contemplation, but behind it in their capacity for action. Keen to detect the follies and the inconsistencies which surround them, shrinking from the contact and the friction of the rough and boisterous world without, and building within the solitude of their meditations the airy fabric of a regenerated and purified existence, they pass their nights in unproductive study, and their days in dreams. With intelligence bright and copious enough to illuminate and to warm the chill atmosphere of the surrounding world, if the scattered rays were concentrated, but with an inability or disinclination to impress themselves upon other minds, they pass their lives without obtaining a result, and their characters dwarfed by their distance from the actual universe, acquire an apparent indistinctness and feebleness, which in reality does not belong to them.

The impending revolution in church and state, which hung like a gathering thundercloud above England's devoted head, was exciting to the stronger spirits, whether of mischief or of virtue, who rejoiced to mingle in the elemental war, and to plunge into the rolling surge of the world's events, while to the timid, the hesitating, and the languid, it rose like a dark and threatening phantom, scaring them into solitude, or urging them to seek repose and safety in obscurity. Thus there may be men whose spirits are in advance of their age, while still the current of the world flows rapidly past them.

Of such men, and of such instincts, was the solitary who sat on the cliffs of Shawmut. Forswearing the country of his birth and early manhood, where there seemed in the present state of her affairs no possibility that minds like his could develop or sustain themselves — dropping as it were, like a premature and unripened fruit, from the bough where its blossoms had first unfolded — he had wandered into voluntary exile, with hardly a regret. Debarred from ministering at the altar to which he had consecrated his youth, because unable to comply with mummery at which his soul revolted, he had become a high-priest of nature, and had reared a pure and solitary altar in the wilderness. He had dwelt in this solitude for three or four years, and had found in the contemplation of nature, in the liberty of conscience, in solitary study and self-communing, a solace for the ills he had suffered, and a recompense for the world he had turned his back upon forever.

His spirit was a prophetic spirit, and his virtues belonged not to his times. In an age which regarded toleration as a crime, he had the courage to cultivate it as a virtue. In an age in which liberty of conscience was considered fearful licentiousness, he left his fatherland to obtain it, and was as ready to rebuke the intolerant tyranny of the nonconformist of the wilderness, as he had been to resist the bigotry and persecution of

the prelacy at home. In short, the soul of the gentle hermit flew upon pure white wings before its age, but it flew, like the dove, to the wilderness. Wanting both power and inclination to act upon others, he became, not a reformer, but a recluse. Having enjoyed and improved a classical education at the university of Cambridge, he was a thorough and an elegant scholar. He was likewise a profound observer, and a student of nature in all her external manifestations, and loved to theorize and to dream in the various walks of science. The botanical and mineralogical wonders of the new world were to him the objects of unceasing speculation, and he loved to proceed from the known to the unknown, and to weave fine chains of thought, which to his soaring fancy served to bind the actual to the unseen and the spiritual, and upon which, as upon the celestial ladder in the patriarch's vision, he could dream that the angels of the Lord were descending to earth from heaven.

The day was fast declining, as the solitary still sat upon the peak and mused. He arose as the sun was sinking below the forest-crowned hills which girt his sylvan hermitage, and gazed steadfastly towards the west.

"Another day," he said, "hath shone upon my lonely path, another day hath joined the buried ages which have folded their wings beneath yon glowing west, leaving in their noiseless flight across this virgin world no trace nor relic of their passage. 'T is strange — 't is fearful — this eternal and unbroken silence. Upon what fitful and checkered scenes hath yonder sun looked down in other lands, even in the course of this single day's career. Events, as thickly studded as the stars of heaven, have clustered and shone forth beneath his rays, even as his glowing chariot-wheels performed their daily course; and here, in this mysterious and speechless world, as if a spell of enchantment lay upon it, the silence is unbroken, the whole face of nature still dewy and fresh. The step of civilization hath not

adorned nor polluted the surface of this wilderness. No stately temples gleam in yonder valleys, no storied monument nor aspiring shaft pierce yonder floating clouds — no mighty cities, swarming with life, filled to bursting with the ten thousand attendants of civilized humanity, luxury and want, pampered sloth, struggling industry, disease, crime, riot, pestilence, death — all hotly pent within their narrow precincts — encumber yon sweeping plains; no peaceful villages, clinging to ancient, ivy-mantled churches — no teeming fields, spreading their vast and nourishing bosoms to the toiling thousands, — meet this wandering gaze. No cheerful chime of vesper bell, no peaceful low of the returning kine, no watch-dog's bark, no merry shout of children's innocent voices, no floating music from the shepherd's pipe, no old familiar sounds of humanity, break on this listening ear. No snowy sail shines on yon eternal ocean, its blue expanse unruffled and unmarred as the azure heaven; and ah — no crimson banners float the sky, and no embattled hosts shake with their martial tread this silent earth. 'T is silence and mystery all. Shall it be ever thus? Shall this green and beautiful world, which so long hath slept invisibly at the side of its ancient sister, still wear its virgin wreath unsoiled by passion and pollution? Shall this new, vast page in the broad history of man, remain unsullied, or shall it soon flutter in the storm-winds of fate, and be stamped with the same iron record, the same dreary catalogue of misery and crime, which fills the chronicle of the elder world? 'T is passing strange, this sudden apocalypse! Lo is it not as if the universe, the narrow universe which bounded men's thoughts in ages past, had swung open, as if by an almighty fiat, and spread wide its eastern and western wings at once, to shelter the myriads of the human race?"

The hermit arose, slowly collected a few simples which he had culled from the wilderness, a few roots of early spring flowers which he destined for his garden, and stored them in his wallet,

and then grasping his long staff, began slowly to descend the hill.

As the slender form of the exile, with his sad-colored garb and pilgrim's scrip and staff, stood out in dark relief against the western sky, the only human figure in that solitude, he seemed almost a creation of the fancy, a pathetic but sublime image, contrasting and yet harmonizing in a wild and mystic sense with the wilderness scene around. He slowly descended the steep south-western declivity of the hill where he had so long been musing, and which, broken with crags, and here and there thickly overgrown with large trees, whose ponderous branches stretched across his path, presented a rough and uncertain footing to the wanderer. After a few minutes' walk, he reached a wide and open glade, which was spread out at the base of the hill and along the secluded basin which received the waters of the Charles. The undulating surface of this grassy expanse was studded with many detached and magnificent forest trees, principally white oaks, hickory, and elms, and presented the appearance of a natural park of some fifty acres, fringed towards the water with a thick growth of maples, alders, and birches. At the base of the hill which rose abruptly to the north and east, facing southwardly upon the open park, and having the broad and beautiful cove upon its right, stood the cottage of Blaxton.

It was a startling and impressive picture of cultivation and refinement that little cottage, embowered in freshly budding vines, surrounded by a garden laid out with artistic elegance, and backed by a young and thrifty orchard. It was an English homestead, starting as if by magic out of the bosom of that vast wilderness, and stirring the deepest fountains of feeling with its placid beauty. It was the first gladdening footsteps of culture; it was as if Minerva, mother of all humanizing arts, had according to the ancient fable, just stamped her foot upon

the virgin soil and the olive of civilization had leaped forth to greet her coming.

The house was built in those picturesque forms which were then so common in England. It was low-browed, irregular, rambling, with sharp-pointed gables, a red-tiled roof, small lattice windows with diamond panes, and a porch covered thickly with woodbines. The materials of which it had been constructed had been brought from England, and it resembled in its general character a miniature parsonage. The early swallows built their nests under its eaves, and the ancient crows with sable stole and solemn note circled about the surrounding pines, or rested in dark clusters upon their umbrageous tops. The young orchard had but just come into bearing, indicating the length of time during which the exile had made his abode here, and the spring being earlier than common in that region, the pink flakes of the peach blossoms were strewn already upon the ground, while from the young and blushing buds upon the apple boughs a faint fragrance diffused itself upon the evening breeze. Between the cottage and the water's edge stood a single pine of enormous height, the growth of centuries, its massive but tapering trunk, rising like a colossal shaft to a dizzy height, bare of branches till near the summit, and then throwing out those wild, wizard boughs, crowned with eternal verdure, and murmuring unceasing music, which make this tree so picturesque and remarkable. In the fork of one of these arms was the large and rudely raftered nest of an osprey or fish-hawk, who haunted the same spot year after year, unscared by the gentle hermit who had made him one of his most cherished companions. The precinct around the house, garden, and orchard was separated from the water and the great park in front, by a wild and impenetrable fence of upturned roots, the skeleton remains of the forest giants which had been felled, or had fallen in natural decay, and was thus protected from the wolves and other enemies

by a natural and very effective barrier. Upon the western confine of this inclosure,* and very near the pebbly margin of the shore, a pure and sparkling fountain, the silver spring from which the whole promontory of Shawmut derived its name, welled forth from the deep black mould, amid a thicket of shrubs and interlacing vines, and was overshadowed by a rustic arbor, which the graceful care of Blaxton had raised as a temple to the water nymph whom he looked upon as the presiding deity of his rural domain.

Blaxton passed through the entrance to his hermitage, lingered a moment in his garden, and entered the house.

A cheerful fire of hickory logs looked invitingly to him as he came in from the chill atmosphere. The room in which he sat was his innermost sanctuary. He had brought with him what in those days was no contemptible library, and the tall dark folios, some two hundred in number, were ranged in a dark, antique, bookcase against the walls of the silent apartment. A large table, encumbered with books and manuscripts, stood in a corner, and an ample cabinet, stored with a considerable number of specimens of natural history, occupied a whole side of the room.

"Welcome, friends of my solitude," he exclaimed, as his eye looked complacently upon his dumb but eloquent companions. "Welcome, ye sages of the olden time; welcome, ye bards whose strains, enshrined in the eternal crystal of a buried language, are ever redolent of youth and joy, breathing as freshly here upon this silent wilderness as once, attuned to classic lyres and gushing from the reedy voices of garlanded youths or dancing nymphs, amid shouts of martial triumph or bacchanalian rapture, they did thousands of years ago. Waked by the music of your immortal strains, these savage and solitary realms become

* See Note IV.

instinct with fabulous life. A gentle nymph rises from yonder fountain, and pours the sparkling water from her silver urn. Forth from the dim recesses of yon ancient wood, behold the graceful fawns trooping in mystic dances, beating the earth to the wild harmony of their clashing cymbals. In every tangled thicket lurk the leaping satyrs, through all the forest floats the rustic music of the hairy Pan, from every ancient oak or drooping elm starts forth a green-robed Dryad. What is it to me, that the solitude is unbroken by the voice of man? Led by your hand, am I not surrounded and entranced by visions of a long vanished world? And you, ye stern, rude chroniclers of later and darker ages, ye dark-cowled, cloistered monks, holding aloft, above the wild and barbarous deluge, ingulphing the world around you, the sacred torch of reason and of science,—do ye not read to me a lesson of undying wisdom? As I shudder at the dark tale of rapine, and the ceaseless conflict between brother men, the eternal and almost hopeless striving of the good, the unholy triumph of the evil spirits of our race, am I not taught to seek in solitude and self-communion for the solace which the world denies. And most of all, to thee, holy and blessed talisman, which alone art powerful to guide my tottering steps; to thee, ever-gushing fountain of divine revelation; to thee, comforter in sorrow, guide in danger, all-sufficient companion in the solitary valley of dark shadows, to thee do I look for support and consolation; and most of all do I bless his holy name that hath vouchsafed to me this treasure. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want."

The yellow light of the fire fell fitfully upon the meek head of the recluse, as he sat upon his antique chair, bending over his clasped and illuminated bible. Late he sat within that secluded cell, immersed in sacred study, or indulging ever and anon in profound and enraptured reverie. The long, distorted shadows, projected by the various objects in the apartment, wavered upon

the walls and ceiling, while the deep-toned, monotonous ticking of an ancient clock which stood by the door, seemed to moralize with its iron tongue upon the steady but unheeded flight of time. The fire burned low, the wind of night sighed gently through the pine tops, and there was a faintly audible whisper, as the thin skeleton arms of the drooping elms which hung around the house, swept mournfully across the roof.

Blaxton shut the book and gazed, lost in meditation, upon the smouldering firebrands. In the oppressive silence of that midnight solitude, the slightest sounds of nature seemed to acquire a vague importance. The dropping of a brand upon the hearth, the low hissing of the sap in the green logs, or the sigh of the breeze around the lattice, which sounded like an articulate, disembodied voice, would ever and anon cause the solitary to start and listen as if unseen spirits were holding communion with him. In that age of superstition, when a belief in supernatural visitation was universal, it was not to be expected that a man of imaginative mind and nervous temperament like Blaxton, leading such a life of seclusion and study, being himself, as it were, an unreal and almost impossible phantom in the wild scene through which he seemed rather to flit like an apparition than to inhabit it like an earthly resident, should be free from the prevailing conviction of his times. Suddenly, as he mused by his fireside, there seemed to be a faint, inexplicable sound, as if a finger were drawn across the window-pane. His heart stood stock still, and for an instant he dared not raise his eyes towards the casement. He aroused himself, however, in a moment, and, without moving from his seat, strained his eyes upon the glass from whence the sound seemed to have proceeded. There was nothing there, save the wandering spray of a woodbine, moved by the wind and flickering in the sickly light of the late risen moon. It must have been his imagination. He composed himself again, and forcibly directed his thoughts to other matters.

Yet the sound had been distinct, though gentle, and seemed not to have been produced by the swaying of the delicate vine. Presently the sound was repeated, and this time more audibly than before. He could not be mistaken, the glass of his casement was swept gently by human fingers. It was a low, strange sound, or something resembling rather the phantom of a sound, which jarred upon his nerves, and sent a shiver through his frame. It was as if spectral fingers were beckoning him to the window to look out perhaps upon some nameless horror which should freeze his blood. His heart, which had stood still before, now beat audibly in his bosom. He could hear its pulsations as distinctly as he could the slow tick of the clock which had been sounding monotonously on, and which now by its deep-throated, premonitory gurgle, seemed about to strike the hour of midnight. Again the sweeping spirit fingers stole along the glass. He sprang to his feet, gazed hurriedly at the window, and then stood as if changed to stone. A face of ashy paleness was gazing at him from without. He could see its features distinctly, and recognised them but too well, The phantom of one, too dearly loved, too early lost, was gazing upon him. The countenance wore a sad and warning expression, and the large, mournful eyes spoke of guilt and late remorse. Two white hands clung to the lattice and seemed to implore his forgiveness and pity with their mute supplication. It was a fearful thing for the solitary, thus at deep midnight, in the midst of that boundless desert, with his mind already filled with mystic fancies, engendered by his late reading and his prolonged reveries, to be confronted with what he could not but deem a visitant from the world of spirits. There is nothing more startling in the midnight solitude, than even the fancied apparition of a face looking in through our window from the external gloom, and to this lonely man there seemed not a doubt that this was an apparition.

He stood as if transfixed. He essayed to speak, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He strove to move, to shake off, if he could, what perhaps was an incubus, a creation of a disordered fancy. His limbs refused to obey his will, his knees shook, but would neither advance or recede. How long he stood gazing at the phantom he could not tell, but after a time it seemed to clasp its hands above its head, and then to melt away into the darkness. What meant this visitation? Did it bid him forth, for some mysterious reason, into the midnight wilderness? He breathed more freely now that those sorrowful eyes were no longer gazing upon him; his blood, which had been chilled in its current, now throbbed freely from his heart, his limbs regained their elasticity, his soul resumed its mastery.

Impelled by an irresistible impulse, he sprang towards the door, breathing a fervent prayer for protection as he went. He passed rapidly through the little porch, emerged from its shadow into the moonlight, and then gazed hurriedly around. The sickly rays of the waning moon shed a mystic light upon the scene. An unaccountable and oppressive influence seemed to pervade the air. A sensation of being the victim of unseen mockery stole over him. The weird fantastic shapes of the vast roots, which inclosed his domain, looked, in the shifting and uncertain light, like a troop of squat and jeering demons. The owl shrieked, the boding whippoorwill uttered her ceaseless plaint, and the shrill, piercing cry of the tree toad struck upon his ear like the yell of a fiend. He strained his eyes in every direction, but nothing met his gaze that seemed to have connection or sympathy with his late mysterious visitant. The moonlight lay in faint patches among the shadows of the trees, but no semblance of humanity seemed to be stirring throughout the breathless solitude. After remaining in the cold night air for a few moments, he was turning back to his cottage, feeling more and more convinced that he had been the prey of some

wild delusion, when suddenly, far down in the dim distance, just on the edge of the alder thicket, and not far from the margin of the bay, he beheld the dim outline of a human figure, wildly extending its arms for an instant, and then hurriedly clasping its hands above its head, as it glanced swiftly as a flash through the moonlight, and then faded away into the dark shadow of the forest. For a moment, the hermit, who was excited, but less perturbed, by this second apparition, was inclined to follow the phantom into the morass, where it had seemed to melt away. He restrained himself, however, and stood still upon the spot, gazing steadfastly upon the dark and tangled thicket where the mysterious figure had disappeared. But there was no farther indication of its presence. After remaining till he was chilled with the bleak night air, and exhausted with excitement, he became convinced that, whatever it might betoken, the phantom had at last vanished. He fell upon his knees to offer a devout prayer for guidance and support, and then, overcome by the tumultuous sensations of those midnight moments, he walked languidly into the house.

As the door closed after him, the faint plash of an oar seemed to float, for an instant, from the cove, and then all was still again.

CHAPTER IX.

SYMPATHY AND ANTIPATHY.

It was natural that Esther should be looking with as much eagerness, although with widely different motives, for a confirmation of the intelligence by their own private letters, as did Sir Christopher Gardiner. Truly it seemed a strange destiny which had brought these two powerful spirits, so contrasted, into such recent and accidental conjunction. An imaginative temper might have figured these two personages, thus, as it were, hovering about the cradle of an infant state, the mysterious and threatening form of the knight, the angelic figure of the maiden, thus floating in strange proximity, as the embodiments of the two great conflicting elements of our nature. Like a dark enchanter and a beneficent fairy, like an evil genius and a halo-crowned saint, these two opposite but powerful influences seemed fated to some mystic conflict — who could foretell its duration or its result?

As Esther looked forth from the door-step along the glade, which had so recently witnessed her conflict with the wolf, and her rescue by some unknown but unforgotten deliverer, she saw the figure of a man in Puritan habiliments, just emerging from the corner of the forest. She supposed at first that it was Sir Christopher Gardiner coming to renew his inquiries, but before she had time to call to her brother, whose presence she desired at all their future interviews, she observed that she was mistaken. The new comer, although above the middle height, was by no means so tall as Gardiner, and moved with a languid gait, very different from the knight's lithe movements. His steeple-

crowned hat was slouched deeply upon his brows, so as almost entirely to conceal his features — his garments were old and travel stained, and he supported his feeble steps upon a staff. He appeared, however, to be more oppressed with fatigue than with age, and his frame, muscular and well knit, seemed to belie his drooping deportment.

He gravely saluted Esther as he approached.

"Is this the residence of Walter Ludlow?" he asked in a husky voice.

"It is," said Esther; "have you business with my brother?"

"And you are Esther Ludlow," he continued, in a low hesitating tone, looking upon the ground as he spoke, and, as it would seem, laboring under some kind of embarrassment.

"I am Esther Ludlow," replied the maiden, "but you seem fatigued, good brother. By your garb you should be from Plymouth — and you must have travelled far to-day. Enter, I pray you, into the house; my brother is now in the neighborhood, and will insist that a travelling stranger like yourself should partake his hospitality."

"You are very kind, good maiden, but my frame is, perhaps, not so languid as it seems — I have still far to travel, and the sun hath already set."

"The twilight," said Esther, "will soon be upon us. Enter our house and refresh yourself. It is the hour of our evening meal, and my brother will soon be here."

The stranger seemed reluctant to enter the house. He lingered near the door-step, unwilling to accept Esther's proffered hospitality, and yet seeming slow to declare his errand. He seemed oppressed by some secret emotion.

"My brother will deem himself ill treated, if you decline the shelter of our humble roof this night," continued Esther, "The night is approaching, the air is already growing keen, the wilderness is full of danger to a lonely wayfarer."

"The dangers of the wilderness are not those which I most fear," answered the stranger enigmatically, and in the same husky tone. "But I have forgotten myself strangely," he continued, as he observed something like suspicion floating about the clear brow of his companion. "My business is a brief one, and concerns as much Esther Ludlow as her brother. A vessel has arrived at Plymouth, and I have been intrusted by the man of God, our worthy governor and brother, to deliver one or two packets to the scattered indwellers of the wilderness. Lo! here is that which beareth the superscription of Esther Ludlow."

The humble and toil-worn stranger drew two parcels from his bosom, as he spoke, and handed them respectfully to the maiden. Esther with eager thanks snatched the proffered epistles, one of which was addressed to herself, and one to her brother, and hastily breaking the seals of her own dispatch, she found, with delight, that it inclosed four different letters. She hurriedly examined the handwriting of each, and then laid them all down with a heavy sigh.

"From him alone not one line of remembrance, not one word of regret," she murmured.

The tears came into the proud eyes of Esther, and with the letters all unopened upon her lap, she sat like a beautiful statue, all her animation fled, her cheek pale as marble, and her features working with the expression of subdued but deep emotion. For a moment she seemed totally unaware of the presence of the stranger. The eagerness with which she had opened the dispatch vanished, her anxiety to hear all the details of the great movement, in which she felt so intense an interest, had apparently subsided into indifference, and, lost in sorrowful thought, she seemed heedless of all, save the one feeling, which exclusively occupied her mind.

While she remained apparently unconscious of all that was

passing before her, the stranger stood, gazing intently upon her, from beneath the slouched hat which concealed his features. His presence seemed to have been wholly forgotten, or she might have perhaps felt some surprise that the feeble, toil-worn wanderer should prefer to stand thus transfixed and motionless before her, rather than seek repose and refreshment in the house.

She aroused herself at last with an effort, mechanically lifted one of her letters, and broke the seal. The trifling physical exertion seemed for a moment to change the current of her thoughts, and to arouse her interest in the weighty matters which had so recently occupied her mind. She began to read one of the letters with avidity, when suddenly she remembered the stranger, and turned her eyes full upon him. She blushed, she knew not why, as she saw him thus immovably gazing upon her; but as he seemed embarrassed and unwilling to meet her glance, she merely attributed the strangeness of his deportment to awkwardness.

"In sooth," said she, "I have strangely forgotten my duty. You will have but a lame account to give of the hospitality of Naumkeak when you return to the brethren of Plymouth. If you persist in refusing the shelter of our roof, at least suffer me to bring you some trifling refreshment; and I pray you to repose your wearied limbs on yonder bench for a little time before you proceed upon your journey."

"A crust of bread and a cup of cold water," continued the stranger in the same husky tones which had first marked his voice; "a crust of bread and a cup of cold water is all that I require, and I shall crave your pardon if I take this refreshment upon the outside of your domicil. I have yet far to travel to night, and I will repose for a moment upon this bench."

With this the stranger seated himself, and Esther went for a moment into the house. She soon re-appeared, bringing the simple food which he had desired, and placed it upon the bench beside him.

"With your leave," said she, "I will even glance over the contents of this letter, while you are reposing and refreshing yourself."

As she spoke, Esther again resumed the letter which she had opened, and became absorbed in the contents.

Meanwhile the stranger sat with untasted bread, hiding his face with his hands, and gazing upon the excited features of the beautiful Puritan, as if he would have read her soul.

"Then they have not yet sailed," she murmured half audibly, as she hastily turned the pages of her letters. "Endicott is to set forth in June, and with him Gott and Brakenbury and Davenport, and other good and true men — and much opposition is expected from certain friends of Sir Ferdinando Gorges — the knight and his powerful party are supposed to be moving heaven and earth to prevent the king's grant of a charter — he is thought already to have sent his emissaries to this country — two worthy and learned clergymen, Master Higginson and Master Skelton have agreed to embark in the ——; Holy Father of Mercy! Henry Maudsley in New England!" The letter dropped from her hands as she uttered this exclamation; and her eyes filled with tears as she murmured, "Then I did him wrong; one cause alone could bring Henry Maudsley to New England."

"Aye, Esther, but one cause," said a deep, familiar voice at her side.

Esther started, grew pale as ashes, and trembled like a leaf. She looked towards the stranger. He was no longer reclining upon the bench, but had advanced very near to her, his tattered cloak was thrown aside, his hat had fallen to the ground, revealing the well-remembered face of Harry Maudsley.

"Aye, Esther, but one cause," he cried, while she seemed contending with a variety of emotions, among which pride seemed at length to gain the mastery, suppressing her tears, smoothing her agitated brow and restoring a faint tinge to her

marble cheek. "Forgive me," he continued in an impassioned tone, "that I have dared to appear in this disguise before you. It was accident which prompted it, as it was accident which first revealed to me the place of your residence, when I deemed you an inhabitant of the Plymouth Colony."

"And was it accident, too," replied Esther, who had by a strong effort recovered a portion of her calmness, "and was it accident that brought Henry Maudsley into these wild deserts?"

"No, Esther," was the reply. "Your own heart tells you why I am here. Yet believe me, that although impelled across half a world by a passion which I have struggled to conquer, till at last it has conquered me, although brought to your feet by an impulse which I could no longer resist, yet, believe me, I had no unmanly, no unworthy motives in this disguise."

"And yet," answered Esther, "false robes should never hide a true heart. If, as I am willing to believe, I was the motive of your exile, why steal thus masked into my presence, why treacherously surprise my unguarded thoughts?"

"Again I implore you to forgive me, Esther," replied Maudsley. "I had been longer than you think a resident in this neighborhood, not dreaming that you were so near me. A poor wayfaring pilgrim, whom I chanced to rescue from indignity, had been intrusted with letters addressed to you and to others. Learning thus unexpectedly the place of your residence, I could not resist the temptation to look once more upon your face."

"And yet it would have been easy for you," answered Esther, "to have made your appearance long ago, and without disguise."

"Aye," answered Maudsley, "and one constituted as you, cannot perhaps conceive of the wayward and perverse impulses of a temperament like mine. Although I had crossed a winter's sea in a miserable bark, only that I might throw myself once

more at your feet, yet no sooner did I find myself in the same wilderness with you, then I began almost to shrink from our interview."

"This is indeed strange," said Esther calmly.

"And it is strange, too," continued Maudsley, "that a miser should starve among uncounted riches. Why did I hoard, like a treasure, the golden moments of our meeting? I know not. At last, influenced by a rebellious feeling at the power which I felt you exercised over my whole nature, and assisted by the singular accident which I have explained, I determined to look upon you once more, once more to listen to your voice, and then to tear myself away forever."

"Maudsley," replied Esther sorrowfully, "your character remains as wilful and as enigmatical as ever. Why then did you not execute your purpose?"

"Because," was the passionate reply, "because unintentionally I had surprised a secret dearer to me than the whole world beside. When I found that I had not been entirely forgotten, when I heard your gentle voice breathing my name, when, as you believed, there was not an ear in the whole wilderness to hear you, judge if it were then in my power to tear myself away."

It is unnecessary to record at length the conversation of the lovers. It may be believed that the displeasure of Esther at Maudsley's disguise was not very difficult to appease; and it may be believed, too, that she was deeply affected by the evidence which he had given of his constancy and his devotion to herself. In this interview, the first which had occurred between them for years, there were a thousand matters to excite their interest, about which Esther, who had now been so long in exile, was desirous to be informed.

"You have told me nothing of yourself, Henry," said she, "nor of your friends. You have not told me how the world

hath prospered with those who are nearest and dearest to you at home. Your sister, is she still so sad and broken-spirited, or doth she recover from the heavy blow?"

"My sister is dead," answered Maudsley, mechanically, but in a deep and gloomy voice.

"Dead! is Edith dead? so young — so beautiful — so gentle — so virtuous. Has she so soon gone down in sorrow to her grave! Though I never enjoyed but a slight and passing acquaintance with her, yet I could weep with you, Henry, for I know how much you were to each other, and I know how much affection, and how many pure womanly graces are buried in her tomb."

"I do not weep for her," said her companion, in a moody but composed tone. "You see I do not weep for her. She has been released from a life of suffering; nay, more," added Maudsley, in a hoarser tone, "she has been released from a life of unmerited but deep disgrace. Virtuous, high-spirited, as she was, it was better that she should sink at once into her grave, rather than creep through an obscure life, bowed to the earth with shame that was not hers, and with tears of blood lamenting that she had ever seen the light of day."

"And her husband?"

"Her husband," cried Maudsley, grinding his teeth with a passionate expression, and uttering his words slowly, one by one, as if they fell like drops of blood from his heart — "her husband has fled. The villain has escaped me. I have sought him long, but he has still eluded my pursuit. But vengeance, though it sleeps, doth not die; and if he be still upon the living earth, I will yet track him to his lair. The blood of my murdered sister cries out to me from the ground. My heart is not deaf to the appeal."

"Alas, Henry," said Esther, "vengeance belongeth only to God. Vengeance is his, and he will repay. Believe me, that it

is not wise nor well thus to constitute yourself the avenger even of one so deeply injured. Think you, that he who hath been the wicked cause of all this misery shall escape God's wrath? But tell me, Henry, was the fearful mystery ever solved, which rendered your sister's marriage a nullity, and thus blasted her happiness and laid her in an untimely grave?"

"It was so," answered Maudsley, in the same calm but gloomy tone. "The mystery was solved, at least in part; solved sufficiently to teach my sister that there was no relief except beyond the grave. But the tale is long, and at this time and place need not be repeated; but you shall know it all. Suffice it now, when I inform you, that their marriage was indeed a nullity because ——" and as he spoke, Maudsley's voice subsided into a hoarse whisper, which, however, fell distinctly upon Esther's ear, "because there was another gentle and earlier claimant for the honored hand of her husband."

As he spoke these words, Maudsley laughed with a low, savage laugh, that chilled the blood of his companion. "There were other matters too, but I will not now spread aught of the foul mass before your eyes. Suffice it, that the villain has escaped, for you know that I was unfortunately absent during the whole of these transactions, but while he exists, the fires of hell could not burn out the record of his guilt. Let us speak no more of this, dear Esther," continued Maudsley, shaking off the dark shadow from his mind, and speaking again in the earnest, but more vivacious tone which was natural to him. "Let us speak no more of this, but of you. The dead are in their graves, where the broken-hearted sleep well. But do not, in mercy do not, persist in your sad determination to entomb yourself thus body and soul together in these gloomy deserts. With every day which finds your stay prolonged, the cold enchantment seems to wind itself more and more about your senses. Arouse yourself ere your blood be chilled and your brain bewildered.

Promise me, dearest Esther, that I may return and bear you from this fearful world."

"I had hoped," said Esther, "that we had done with this subject, upon which it is impossible that our hearts should ever beat in unison. Distress me, I beseech you, no farther, and believe that my decision is irrevocable."

It will appear from these last observations, that the lovers, in spite of the knowledge of their mutual affections, were as far from a real understanding, as when they last separated in England.

The impetuosity and wilfulness of Maudsley's character were as incorrigible as the calm but almost infatuated enthusiasm of Esther was inflexible.

It had been her lover's object throughout their whole interview, to induce her to forswear the purpose to which she had devoted her life. He represented to her in the most passionate terms the cruelty to herself, to him, to her brother, to all the world, of which she was guilty in thus encloistering herself for life in that dreary wilderness. He painted in the most glowing colors, which a lively fancy could suggest, the delights which might yet be theirs, surrounded at home by all the enjoyments of affluence in a civilized land.

His words fell coldly, more than coldly upon Esther's ear. It was not that she was an enthusiast, and therefore, like many enthusiasts, a bigot; for this her nature was too feminine. But she was more and more convinced that the dissimilarity of their characters and ruling motives, was so absolute, that happiness together was impossible. All that she deemed most high and holy upon earth in his eyes was trivial or false. While he could not help respecting her enthusiasm, he looked upon it as madness, and could not avoid expressing, in indignant language, his abhorrence of the influences by which her whole existence was sacrificed to the maintenance of a pernicious and an absurd idea.

All his social relations, his whole education, all the influences under which he had existed since boyhood, had taught him to look upon Puritanism as an uncouth and uncomfortable fanaticism. His mind revolted at the thought that a woman like Esther Ludlow, partly in deference to the feelings of a moody and weak-minded brother, partly in sympathy with a perverse movement of the age, should bury all her graces in this living sepulchre. His pride too had been aroused, and in crossing the ocean his purpose had been fixed — he had vowed in his heart to tear Esther from the wilderness to which she had devoted herself, and to bear her home in triumph. He looked upon her as a martyr, chained to a funereal pyre, as a victim exposed in the desert to appease the wrath of a fabulous dragon, and he felt a thousand hearts swelling within him, as he swore to rescue her from her impending fate.

The quarrel which had occurred between them long before in England, was of a nature which was almost irremediable, because it had for the first time torn aside the veil from both their hearts, and revealed to each other the gulf which in reality flowed between them. The sneering indignation which Maudsley had allowed himself to express against the infatuation of Walter Ludlow, and the influence which it had exercised upon the mind of his sister, had led to a more full development of their feelings, and Maudsley learned for the first time, with anger and dismay, the extent of what he designated Esther's fanaticism.

Between two natures, both proud, while the determination of the one was fully matched by the impetuosity of the other, it may be easily imagined that the chasm must have grown each day wider. It is unnecessary, therefore, at this time, to relate much more of their present interview, farther than to say, that they found each other unchanged in feelings, and yet unchanged in purpose. Esther's nature revolted at the sacrifice of all her convictions and purposes, which was demanded of her almost

imperiously by her wilful lover; while he, despite the words of affection which had fallen from her lips when there could have been no intention to deceive, felt his pride engaged in the contest, and could not help arguing to himself, that, after all, that affection must be calm and passionless, which possessed not sufficient power to conquer her religious fanaticism.

Suddenly, while these thoughts were passing through his mind, another thought suggested itself to him. With startling abruptness he requested to know who was the fortunate personage in Puritan habiliments, who had lifted her from the ground at the time when she had so nearly escaped destruction by the wolf.

Although at the moment when the adventure happened Maudsley had not the slightest suspicion whose life was in his hands, yet he now felt a certainty under the circumstances that the female whom he had rescued from danger could have been no other than Esther.

Esther was almost overpowered, when she was thus suddenly informed that it was to Maudsley's arm that her safety upon that occasion had been owing; but even while she was murmuring her broken expressions of gratitude, Maudsley impetuously repeated his question.

"Led hither," said he, "by a mysterious fate, I was yet too far removed to recognise either your own countenance or that of your sable-suited admirer. It was not your brother — the stranger was far taller than Walter Ludlow. Rebuke my impetuosity, if you like, but you cannot wonder that I should be desirous of learning the name of one who appeared to stand toward you in such near and dear relationship."

"Master Maudsley," replied Esther, with cold dignity, "I have no hesitation in informing you, that the individual whom you saw upon this spot is not in near or dear relationship with me. He is a casual acquaintance, brought hither upon that day

by some trifling business with my brother. He is, I believe, a member of no church community, although he seems a man of a religious and even ascetic disposition. He is a person, however, whose society I am very far from affecting."

"How call you his name?" asked Maudsley, eagerly.

"He is called Sir Christopher Gardiner," answered Esther.

"Sir Christopher Gardiner," cried Maudsley, with a strange sharp cry, as if a dagger had been plunged into his heart. "Sir Christopher Gardiner, the associate of Esther Ludlow! Idiot that I was, not to have suspected this before," continued he to himself, in an undertone.

He mastered his emotion, however, by a strong effort, and forcibly directed the conversation, for a few moments, into other channels. There was, however, a baleful and inexplicable spell exercised upon his nature, by the very name of Sir Christopher Gardiner. Suspicions, vaguely defined, and yet insurmountable, united with a real knowledge of certain matters which inspired distrust and even hatred, filled his soul whenever the image of the mysterious knight was presented to him. It would be premature at this time, to say more than that he felt a strong, although, to a certain degree, a mysterious repugnance, to the character of that adventurer, and a sensation of horror at finding him in communion with Esther Ludlow. His disordered fancy would not, for a long time, obey the dictates of his reason, and after a few moments of broken and incoherent conversation, during which the wonder, indignation, and pity of Esther were alternately excited, he found at last that it was impossible for him any longer to repress his agitation. Muttering a curse upon his weakness, and upon the folly which had led him across the ocean, only to exhibit and proclaim it the more, he uttered aloud a few hasty and common-place expressions of farewell, and then abruptly quitted the presence of Esther, whom he left profoundly afflicted at the character and the result of this singular interview.

The dark shadows of evening were already descending upon the earth, as Maudsley, yielding to the tumultuous torrent of his emotions, strode down the glade with wild rapidity, as if lashed forth into the outer darkness by furies. He dashed violently across the open space which lay immediately before him, and plunged into the gloomy arches of the pine forest. The eternal shade, the cold and fragrant breath of the mighty grove, conveyed no coolness to his heated brow, no soothing balm to the fever in his soul. Stung by a multitude of torturing fancies, which writhed and coiled like serpents from his heart, he swept rapidly through the dim and silent wood. He fled like a coward before the phantom shapes of his excited imagination. Was it for this, that he had sacrificed or was ready to sacrifice his all, home, country, friends, ease, wealth, ambition, pleasure? Was it for this, that he had been ready, though he avowed it not, to forsake the bright sunshine of the world, and bury himself in the vast cloisters of the secluded wilderness? Was it for this, that he had struggled so long and so bravely with his feelings, only to find himself at last, the laughing-stock of a hypocritical, mysterious adventurer, whom he had found to his horror, or whom he imagined that he had found his successful rival. It was strange, but with only the most casual acquaintance with Gardiner, Maudsley had, from the first, conceived an indefinable hatred for him, which, moreover, as he fancied, had been as cordially reciprocated. He had, when occasionally in his presence, been overcome by a singular and unaccountable sensation, and had found himself, urged by he knew not what strange fascination, gazing intently upon his face, and striving to call up some dim, vague, long faded impression of earlier years. In such times, he had been oppressed by a supernatural sense of previous existence, fantastically united with a boding presentiment of the future, a mysterious blending in his mind of the forgotten past, and the unknown hereafter, which troubled

him, he knew not how or why, and which seemed as it were, a spell exercised upon him by the dark physiognomy of the knight. But his sensations now were real, or he deemed them such. Here was the mystery of Gardiner's existence solved; here was the hidden reason of his enigmatical and apparently aimless residence in this wilderness; here was the cause of all this masquerading, his double-faced contradictory mode of life, his solitary journeys, his sudden absences. It was plain as light. He had wondered at his Puritanism, or at what he had always considered his affectation of Puritanism — he wondered no longer. It was the love of Esther Ludlow, which he sought in the depths of these deserts. It was the love of Esther Ludlow which worked these sudden and bewildering transformations. Was it strange? Was it unnatural? Did he not himself acknowledge but too truly the potency of the spell? He shuddered when he contemplated the picture. If Esther loved him, what a fate was hers. In what a gulf of desolation would her trusting heart be wrecked!

He checked himself for a moment as he was speeding breathlessly on, curbed the career of his insane thoughts, and endeavored forcibly to dismiss the subject from his mind. What was it all to him? He had torn himself from the presence of Esther, and he had internally vowed, that the charm should be forever broken, which had bound him so long. What then to him was Gardiner's character, or his mystery, or his way of life? Let him be the devil if he would, and if the pure-hearted Puritan maiden chose to devote her white soul to the fiend, what mattered it to him, when, how, or why, the unholy contract should be completed?

On, on he fled once more through the mirky night, a fugitive from his own thoughts, which seemed like spectres to people the gloomy glades of the forest.

CHAPTER X.

THE MISHAWUM GIANT RECEIVES COMPANY.

Upon that same morning, Thomas Walford, the smith of Mishawum, was standing alone at his wilderness forge. The promontory of Mishawum was a narrow tongue of land, thrust boldly out into the bay, having the Mystic River on its northern, and the Charles River on its southern side, and advancing very closely to the craggy heights of Shawmut. Like its neighbor peninsula, Mishawum was a rough, precipitous spot of ground, with vast granite rocks frowning here and there through the masses of pine and cedar, which with white and black oak, hickory, birch, and maple, covered its sides with wild and ancient verdure. Thomas Walford has already been presented to the reader's acquaintance. His residence, consisting of a thatched log-house, with a kind of shed or shanty which he called his forge, was surrounded by a strong palisade of cedar trunks, ten feet in height and driven deeply into the earth. The general aspect of the place, as may be easily conceived, was wild, rugged, and solitary. The house stood not far from the water's edge, upon the southern declivity of a high and precipitous hill which sloped boldly down into the bay, and the prospect, excepting the remarkable feature of the triple-headed, craggy peninsula opposite, which of course presented a more striking and picturesque effect, when seen from this distance, was very much the same as that which was spread before the eyes of the solitary of Shawmut.

The burly smith stood in his half-subterranean and rustic shanty, whose low thatched roof was supported by the twisted

and rugged stems of cedars. The glare of a brilliant fire fell upon his bull-fronted, shaggy head, his rude and swarthy features, and his massive half-naked bust, while the rest of his leathern clad person was in dark and heavy shadow. He was striking millions of sparks from a ponderous and red-hot bar of iron, at every stroke of his heavy sledge-hammer, and as he stood there in his hairy strength, the only human figure in that solitary retreat, he looked more like some gigantic creature of heathen mythology, some half fabulous Cyclops forging in his mountainous cavern the thunderbolts of Jupiter, than a real and tangible mass of human flesh. Although Walford was the only European inhabitant of the little peninsula where we find him, and which, as has been seen, he held under the Gorges patent, the place and the neighborhood were frequented from time to time by straggling parties of Indians, who were under the nominal jurisdiction of a peaceable and amiable young sagamore, who had already formed friendly connections with the scattered residents of the bay. The natives generally entertained a considerable respect for the blacksmith, who, although very good-natured, and never disposed to quarrel with them unnecessarily, had yet occasionally been known to inflict severe chastisement upon some of their number who had presumed to meddle with him.

The smith paused for a moment, as the plash of oars sounded from the water immediately below him, and listened to learn if perchance any visitors were about to claim his hospitality that morning. He supposed, however, for he did not take the trouble to go to the verge of the cliff to look, that some stray Indians were landing from their canoes upon the beach below, for the sake of baking clams, frying fish, boiling lobsters, or for some other peaceful and culinary purpose, and he had ceased to trouble himself any more about the matter, when all at once he heard footsteps scrambling up the steep ascent, and the sound

of several English voices sounding nearer and nearer to his own precincts. Presently there was a loud rapping at his outer gate.

"Hillo, hillo, hillo, Master Walford!" sounded through the palisades.

"Hillo, hillo," answered the smith, without stirring from his anvil. "Who makes such a pother at this early hour in the morning?"

"Open thy gates, thou inhospitable smith," said a deep, muddy voice, which evidently had soaked through the frowzy beard of Robert Bootefish. "Dost mean to treat thy loving friends and Christian neighbors as pagan Indians or heathen Puritans? Here be I, firstly, and secondly Master Humphrey Rednape, with your friends Cakebread and the Canary Bird, all come to visit you."

"They will call me Canary Bird, Master Smith," whistled a shrill voice through the palisade, "though they know as well as you that my name is Bernaby Doryfall. But for the love of good fellowship let us in. Fear nothing here; we are but honest friends and Christian white men."

"Walk in, my masters," said the burly smith, in a good-humored voice, swinging wide open the gate to admit his visitors.

"Good morrow, Master Smith," said Bootefish, saluting his host with great dignity, as, followed by his three companions, he waddled through the gates, with the stately importance of a plethoric duck. "You have, I think, met with these worthy gentlemen before. Look you, this be Rednape, a swashing knave, and a godly but a drunken sot, and a quarreller in his liquor. And this be Peter Cakebread, a wise fellow, I promise you, and well-instructed and witty, but a vile coward, who would cut his shadow from his heels if he could, to prevent it from following and frightening him forever. And here, this

yellow-coated, piping, whistling little gentleman, is the Canary Bird."

"They call me Cana —— "

"Hold your tongue, sot," interposed the chief butler of Merry-Mount, indignant at the interruption, as the poor little Canary Bird was beginning to chirp his favorite tune.

"Ye are all heartily welcome, my masters," said the smith after the ceremonious Bootefish had concluded his introductory harangue; "and now, if each of you will seat himself upon the softest stump he can find, we will, if you like, proceed to business. What brings you here so early in the morning, Master Bootefish?"

"Master Morton of Merry-Mount," began the Canary Bird.

"Hold your tongue, again, thou impudent yellow-breasted biped," interrupted the butler, "and allow your superior to answer all questions directed to him. Is it thus I am to be rewarded for my indulgence in taking you out a pleasuring this fine morning? Have I not bountifully permitted you the healthful recreation of rowing all the way from Passanogessit? for the devil an oar have I pulled that you might all be gratified, and now is this my reward? Be silent all. Good master smith, I pray your indulgence upon these malapert young followers of mine."

"A truce to your apologies," said the blacksmith, "and now if there be one among you who hath brains enough, I pray to be informed of the purpose of your visit to my humble abode this morning. What would ye of me, Master Bootefish, for in truth thou alone seemest possessed of a sufficient amount of gravity and sobriety to answer a grave and sober question?"

"I praise Heaven," answered the respectable Bootefish, in answer to this address, "I praise Heaven that I am grave and sober, and, as you remark, the only person of gravity and sobriety in this worshipful company. Know then, Master Blacksmith, or in other words, good Master Thomas Walford, that we

have been specially deputed by his worship, Master Thomas Morton, armigero and lord of the manor of Merry-Mount, to bid you to certain mid-summer night revels, which we propose to keep at the said manor of Merry-Mount, to begin at five of the clock upon the morrow evening, and to continue throughout the May-day, which immediately succeedeth, and as many hours longer as the butt holdeth out."

"And be this all which bringeth you here this morning, ye devil's crew?" said the courteous blacksmith to his guests. "Have I not already been bidden to your mid-summer revels for May-day, as this pudding-brained Bootefish hath it, and must my privacy be disturbed for such a marvellous piece of information? Know, then, that I have already promised your Master of Misrule to visit him to-morrow, and with that take yourselves off. Away, ye buffoons; yet stop awhile, your throats shall be moistened before you go."

So saying, he thrust his colossal thumb and fore-finger into an iron ring which was fastened into a large square stone in the corner of his shanty, and lifting the rough and ponderous granite slab as easily as if it had been the lid of a snuff-box, he suddenly disappeared, like some eastern enchanter, into the entrails of the earth.

When he returned, he bore an earthen jug in his hand, out of which he filled a pewter can of ample dimensions for each of his guests, and pledging them himself from the mouth of the jug, he exclaimed,

"There, my merrymen all, taste ye the rosa solis, which hath been ripened in the bowels of the wilderness. What sayest thou, Robin Bootefish, is it potent?"

"Truly good, Master Walford," said the pompous butler, his elephant eyes twinkling with delight, "truly thou hast laid bare a fountain of unequalled purity; thou hast laid up a treasure in the earth; thou hast found a mine of virgin gold in the

entrails of the desert. Good master smith, I honor thee and love thee."

Peter Cakebread drained his measure of the potent fluid at a single draught, gasped for breath as if he had swallowed a sword, according to his paternal avocation, and then with his toad-like eyes, glittering and almost darting from his leathern face, he exclaimed, —

"Thou marvellous ogre of Mishawum! Thou potent enchanter! Let me worship thee. Truly it is comforting to see so sweet and spiritual a resurrection from beneath yon mighty tombstone. Come then to Merry-Mount, and be king over us, most stalwart smith, for truly he who can compel such spirits from the bosom of the earth should fitly rule his fellows."

To this spontaneous indication of fealty to himself, or rather to his subterranean treasures, the blacksmith made no further answer than by filling each man's goblet again, and bidding them drink it off and begone.

Thus conjured, the respectable party of visitors, having again done due honor to the blacksmith's cellar, bade their host farewell.

The blacksmith closed and barred the door as they departed, and then, after listening for a moment to their confused shouting and hallooing as they descended the precipitous hills, helter-skelter, now tumbling over each other, now quarrelling, now laughing, now cursing, he stepped calmly back to his forge.

"Truly an ill-begotten pack of drunken knaves," said he to himself, as he lustily plied the bellows and resumed the occupation which had been interrupted. "This Master Morton is like to raise trouble now for himself, by keeping such a nest of buzzing hornets to swarm about the country, disturbing every honest man in his business. Small love do I bear yonder Plymouth crop-ears, yet I swear by my stedge-hammer, I had rather consort with psalm-singers than with such brawling,

drunken vermin. Thank fortune, I am fairly rid of them for to-day; but stay — what mean these shouts yonder? Heaven forefend the hornets be not all buzzing back again about mine ears. Stay, that was the yell of a red-breech."

In truth, during the worthy blacksmith's soliloquy, a complication of noises had been faintly audible in his sylvan retreat. For a few moments after the last shouts of his departing visitors had died away beneath the hill, there had been an absolute silence. It was, however, soon broken by a confused din of angry shouts, ferocious execrations, clashing weapons, reports of fire-arms, and that shrill, unearthly, fiendlike yell of the savage, which seems to blend into one cry the guttural trill of a Tyrolese mountaineer with the long howl of a famished wolf.

"The drunken varlets are squabbling with the savages," said the smith, after listening attentively. "Have a care, my masters, or mayhap ye may find the Mishawum red-skins not so easily tamed as your Passanogessit savages! Yonder copper-nosed Bootefish may chance to find himself without a scalp to his wooden head before he gets home to his ale butt. By my beard, he would gain by the loss of it, for methinks his wits be mightily in need of airing, and I marvel how the fog is to be ever cleared from his brain, unless a little daylight be let into it with a tomahawk. Fore George! but there be swinging blows and bloody coxcombs passing about by this time, I warrant me," concluded the smith, as the noise of the scuffle became gradually louder and more distinct, while the contending parties appeared to be struggling nearer to the blacksmith's abode.

The worthy blacksmith, who had no particular desire that his solitude should again be interrupted by the drunken foolery of his late visitors, was yet something curious as to the cause of the uproar. As he was, however, about sallying forth to investigate the matter, the sounds seemed suddenly to cease. Either

the contest, whatever it might have been, was terminated, or the scene had been shifted to a more distant spot. He accordingly relinquished his intention, and went on with his work for a few minutes, until he was again aroused by confused shouts, yells, and a variety of other disturbing sounds, which again arrested his attention.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE OF MISHAWUM.

"BESHREW me," said Walford to himself, suddenly abandoning his forge, and advancing towards a look-out which he had built for himself within the precincts; "beshrew me, but there seems to be warm work going on yonder. Of a surety yon vagabonds have incensed by their devil's tricks, some straggling party of my red-legged friends. Peaceable they be and well disposed to those whom they have learned to respect; but the Lord preserve the scalps of such as meddle with them without need."

With these words he ascended his rustic watch-tower, and looked out upon every side. He was apparently not long in arriving at a conclusion as to the state of the case, for after remaining but a few moments in his elevated position, he descended with great rapidity, put on a huge iron head-piece, and arming himself with his sledge-hammer, strode resolutely towards his gate, unbarred its fastening, and sallied forth in the direction of the din which had now subsided again into a confused and discordant murmur.

He strode through the craggy and unsteady pathway which led along the heights, descended from the elevation upon which his solitary abode was situated, and after tearing his way through the tangled thickets which obstructed his passage, he emerged at length upon a low, open plain, which, studded with a few large oak trees, expanded itself upon the southern and south-eastern base of the crag where his hermitage was placed. When

he arrived there, he found a very peculiar scene exhibited to his observation.

Upon the plain were assembled some half dozen savages, belonging, as he well knew by their costume, to the scattered tribe who inhabited the neighborhood of his peninsula. They had evidently that morning established a temporary encampment, as a single wigwam, hastily constructed of oak saplings fastened into the earth, with their boughs bent together at the top, and covered over with coarse matting, formed the central point of the scene. The savages were all young, active, clean-limbed men. Although tall, stout, and evidently excelling both in activity and strength, their limbs possessed that smooth, rounded, harmonious proportion, in which a general diffusion of bodily force over the whole frame, rather than any local development of striking and exaggerated muscular power, indicated the remarkable adaptation of the race to encounter the life of constant endurance and danger to which their climate and their habits subjected them. Their glossy black hair was shorn straight across their foreheads, with a long tuft streaming like a horse's tail behind, except in the case of one who seemed to be a kind of chief, and who wore his shaggy locks turned up over his head like a helmet, with the wing of a hawk fantastically twisted into the crest. They were dressed in deer-skin mantles, picturesquely hanging from their shoulders, wore leather sandals upon their feet, and were all armed with tomahawks, and one with bow and arrows. Their bare and robust chests were daubed with rude, hieroglyphical emblems, among which the impression of a bloody hand seemed the most favorite device, probably because it was the most easily depicted.

As the blacksmith supposed, there had been a contest between the savages and his late visitors, which had evidently terminated in favor of the red skins, who had borne their enemies captive from the scene of the affray to their encampment. Rednape,

who had received an ugly gash upon the shoulder, was seated on the ground with a very ghastly and woe-begone expression upon his sinister phisiognomy, near the entrance to the hut. The helpless Canary Bird was ruefully contemplating an arrow which had struck him in the calf of the leg, without inflicting a very severe wound, and which he was painfully attempting to extract, to the manifest gratification and amusement of his captors, who looked upon his struggles with the most ironical and irritating expressions of condolence. As for the dignified Bootefish, who seemed to have escaped without bodily harm from the contest, the savages had bound him fast to the trunk of an oak, where he stood the butt of his merciless tormentors, looking, however, upon their grimacing visages, and enduring their painful, practical gibes with stoical fortitude.

"Grin away, ye horse-faced, painted devils," said he, with his copper nose flashing defiance at his captors, as one of them, who seemed to take an especial delight in administering to his discomfort, was solacing himself by pricking the worthy precentor's massive cheeks with the point of his knife till the blood flowed at each successive puncture; "Grin away, ye ugly villains. Prick away, ye black-snouted, red-legged vermin. Do ye think a white man and an Englishman is afraid of his own blood? By the bones of my father, had yonder sneaking cowards but stood their ground like men, ye should have had another tale to tell when ye got back, if ye ever did get back to your hovel here. Whoop away, and split your throats, an' it please ye," he continued, as the savage uttered a fiendish and discordant yell close in his ear, which was elicited not by the chief butler's remarks, as he supposed, but by the sudden appearance of the blacksmith upon the scene of action.

Walford had advanced with a good deal of caution after entering upon the open ground, and had posted himself behind a tree for a few moments, while he took a rapid survey of the spectacle

before him. He had entertained no doubt from the first, that the Englishmen had in some manner or other originally provoked the savages, and he had been at first disposed to let them finish the quarrel for themselves as they had begun it. Finding, however, that the odds were so unequal, or rather observing that the contest had in reality ceased, and that his countrymen and late turbulent visitors were likely to suffer a great deal of injury from their captors, even if they escaped with their lives, his blood was roused; and having great reliance on the personal strength and unparalleled audacity which had hitherto supported him so well during his solitary existence in these deserts, he had resolved to come to their rescue if possible. While the savages, one or two of whom had already entered into their hut intent upon domestic and culinary affairs, while the rest were playfully indulging themselves in a variety of pretty and humorous sports at the expense of their victims, pricking their ears, pulling their noses, and punching their sides with the points of their sharp knives, were thus comparatively inattentive to all but the business before them, he had stolen silently and cautiously, but with rapidity from one tree to another, till at last, with a sudden bound he had thrown himself among them, cutting the cords which bound the valorous Bootefish at two blows of his hunting knife, and then waving his sledge-hammer about his head with an imposing air of defiance.

Meanwhile the savages, two or three of whom had thrown their arms upon the ground, and were busily occupied with a great heap of clams, upon which they were proposing to hold a triumphal feast in honor of their victory, sprang suddenly to their feet, uttering a shrill halloo of mingled surprise and rage.

The doughty butler, finding himself no longer a prisoner, seized a tomahawk which lay providentially near him upon the ground, and rushed like an enraged bull upon the nearest Indian.

The savage, after receiving a severe blow upon the head, which seemed, however, not even to stun him, closed with his foe in a fierce and close embrace, which lasted for a few minutes, till both the combatants, furious with rage and hatred, rolled together upon the ground, dealing each other blows with hands, teeth and feet, neither seeming capable of relinquishing his deadly hold upon the other so long as life or breath remained. While these two were thus engaged in desperate struggle, the savage who had taken the lead in tormenting the butler while he was bound, infuriated at his escape, and quivering all over with disappointed malice, now turned upon the blacksmith, who had thus come so unexpectedly to the rescue. He was a tall, powerful creature, less in stature than his gigantic antagonist, but wonderfully active and supple in his movements. He had thrown off the deer-skin mantle from his shoulders, and now advanced to the conflict, wielding aloft his tomahawk, his eye flaming with fury, and his yell ringing through the plain like the cry of a wild beast.

The blacksmith saw that there was no child's play before him. He was unwilling to engage at first in close hug with his enemy, for he knew, by experience, that his anointed and slippery skin, the snake-like movements of his body, and his practical adroitness, would counteract somewhat the advantages of his own enormous strength. He retreated a little space to a tree, while the savage standing at about six yards' distance paused a moment with his tomahawk brandished high in air, and apparently deliberating in his own mind, whether he would close with him at once, or assail him from that distance. His decision was apparently soon made, for whirling his heavy tomahawk twice or thrice around his head, he suddenly hurled it with the velocity of a thunderbolt at the head of his enemy. If the smith had not providentially donned his head-piece before sallying forth that morning, his days had been numbered, for the weapon

struck full upon his forehead, glanced from the rounded iron surface of his cap, and then buried itself in the trunk of the tree against which he was leaning. The bull-fronted smith shook his head slightly, as if a wasp had been buzzing in his ears, and stood as unmoved and impassible as before. The savage, furious at having been foiled, uttered a yell, and then plucking his long, sharp knife from its sheath, rushed madly upon him. Walford calmly awaited his onset till his enemy's hands were almost at his throat, and then swinging his mighty sledge-hammer high in the air, he dealt the savage a single blow upon the skull. It was enough. The wretch dropped like a log, without a single cry or motion, and lay stone dead at his feet.

While this rapid tragedy was acting, Bootefish and his foe still lay coiled together in ferocious embrace, while the other four savages had been engaged in an attempt to secure Rednape and the Canary Bird. They had been but half successful, however, for Rednape, having caught up a knife which one of the savages had left upon the ground, had struck about him so vigorously as to disable one of them, and to free himself entirely from their grasp. Finding himself clear, and not troubling himself much about the general issue of the combat, he had taken to his long legs, and was skimming across the open plain with great celerity.

The unfortunate Doryfall, however, was securely bound hand and foot, and fastened to the same tree which had just before held Bootefish in captivity. He was of course unable to render assistance to the blacksmith, who now found himself opposed single handed to three vigorous and unwounded enemies, not counting the fourth who had received several ugly blows from Rednape, and who now seemed crawling towards Bootefish and his foe, for the apparent purpose of expending his remaining strength in behalf of his red brother, who appeared in danger

of yielding up the last breath in the hands of the truculent butler.

The three now made a concerted and wary attack upon the Thunder-cloud of Mishawum, who had just given such impressive proof of his strength and courage. The smith maintained his post, with his back securely planted against the tree, and daring his enemies to the assault with calm but contemptuous gestures. The savages had, however, evidently no inclination to trust themselves to close quarters with their colossal foe, any sooner than was absolutely necessary. They stood at some twenty paces' distance from him, and as they saw that he was unprovided with any missile weapons, they knew themselves in safety so long as he remained in his quiet attitude against the tree. So many and so fabulous were the reports, that had been related among the scattered dwellers of the neighborhood, concerning the strength of the solitary blacksmith, that the Indians, as we have seen, had long stood in wholesome awe of his prowess, and had generally been inclined rather to cultivate his friendship than to encounter his enmity. Being now engaged in actual contest with him, they were resolved, if possible, to deal with him warily and at advantage. Fortunately for the blacksmith, not one of his enemies was provided with fire-arms, then very rare among the savages, and but one of them was armed with bow and arrows. They were in fact not accoutred for battle, and had accidently become engaged in conflict, after having sought the peninsula that morning with entirely pacific purposes. They had indeed, as will hereafter appear, been first provoked by their enemies to the contest.

The Indian who appeared to be the leader of the party, and who wore the hawk's wing in his head, now suddenly drew his bow, while the blacksmith's attention had been momentarily withdrawn from his enemies by an unexpected noise in an opposite direction, and taking a rapid aim, discharged an arrow

at the solitary champion. The shaft sped with such precision that it struck his left shoulder, pierced through the fleshy part of the arm, and pinned it to the tree.

At the same time, the two other savages were cautiously stealing, each in an opposite direction, towards their intended victim, both armed with knife and tomahawk.

"Beshrew me," said the blacksmith to himself, as without wincing he tore the arrow from his arm, "but this be no time to stand pinned like a scarecrow to a tree. Am I to stay longer here as a butt for yon clumsy red-breech, may I be damned? Look to thyself, thou greasy villain, for, by the Lord, there is a bloody nose in store for thee, and that before thou'rt thirty seconds older."

As he spoke he waved his sledge-hammer, and was about rushing single-handed upon his foe, when a shrill whisper in the air above him suddenly arrested his attention, and for an instant almost caused his stout heart to tremble.

"Now may the foul fiend burn ye all," he shouted, "for if mortal man must fight single-handed with three painted devils upon the earth, and with the powers of the air beside, the odds be too unequal."

"Hist, hist, hist, Thomas Walford," cried a shrill voice above him, which seemed to have something unearthly, and yet familiar in its tones. "Stop where thou art, mine honest and most valorous Smith, dodge about the tree for a few minutes longer, and thou art safe. Take my word for it, and stick to the tree."

"Thy word, in sooth, thou invisible devil," answered the simple-minded blacksmith, somewhat puzzled by this counsel from an aerial source, and yet involuntarily obeying the command. "Thy word, in sooth, thou mocking goblin, and why should I obey thy counsel, if I would keep my scalp under my iron-pot, and not leave it dangling at yonder slippery villain's girdle? What art thou, speak?"

The blacksmith had dodged around the tree as he made this address to his invisible companion, and had thus avoided a second arrow from his most troublesome enemy, while, at the same time, the other two savages had paused in their advance upon him, for reasons which soon appeared.

The pugnacious Bootefish, who had clung to his foe with the tenacity of a bull-dog, and who might have been cut into a hundred pieces before his hands and teeth would have relinquished their hold while life remained, had at last succeeded in exhausting his enemy and obtaining the upper hand. Extricating himself from his savage clutches, he had planted his knee upon his breast, and plunged his knife into his throat. Being thus delivered from the mortal struggle in which he had borne himself so manfully, he had, although somewhat fatigued by his short but ferocious encounter, found no difficulty in dispatching the savage whom Rednape had wounded, and who had well nigh crept upon him, before he had completely vanquished his first antagonist.

Under these circumstances, the contest assumed a totally different aspect. There were now but three of the six Indians remaining, and they were opposed by two Englishmen, not sufficient odds for the savages, in the estimation of the bold blacksmith.

"Who art thou, thou voice without body or legs?" asked Walford, pausing, in spite of himself, to listen to the admonitions of his mysterious companion.

"Body enough, Master Bootefish, and legs more than enough, or my name's not Peter," cried the voice. "Look up here, man, 't is no devil in the air, but simply your friend Peter Cakebread, roosting and cooing like an innocent dove upon the branches of this protective oak."

"Roosting like an innocent dove, sneaking and squealing like a villainous tree-toad rather," said the blacksmith indignantly,

as he looked up and saw the wizzened and preternatural visage of Cakebread, grinning at him through the leafless spray of the tree, while, with his long, ape-like arms and legs, he swung himself from one limb to another. "Why thou lily-livered, toad-faced coward thou, had'st thou had one particle of manhood in thee, thou would'st have been down here like the brave old Bootefish yonder, whom, by heaven, I will never quarrel with again, the longest day I have to live, helping me to punish these greasy red-skins, and not roosting there like an unclean bird among the branches of a tree."

"Fair words, fair words, I pray thee, master blacksmith," replied the unabashed Cakebread from his commanding position. "Truly, am I not sitting here like a guardian angel, directing your endeavors, and praying devoutly for your success? I tell thee, there be succor approaching, for from the summit of this tree I have just seen a boat approaching yonder beach."

"Succor indeed, thou miserable varlet!" answered Walford, "why seest thou not, that three of the six enemies be lumps of dead clay already, and that if I stay here now talking to thee, it is that the other poor devils may run away if they will, for by the Lord, I have marvellously more desire to trounce thee for thy cowardice, than to chastise these red-legged creatures."

In effect the combat seemed to have ended. The three savages had withdrawn to the neighborhood of their wigwam, dragging the two bodies of their slaughtered friends with them, but not daring to meddle with the one which lay at the feet of the blacksmith. They seemed now to limit their ambition to securing their captive, the luckless Doryfall, who, as soon as they had again arrived within ear-shot, had not ceased in his vociferous attempts to set them right as to his real name, and to assure them that Canary Bird was only his "totem," or war name, in Indian phraseology.

Whether the savages supposed that this appellation, derived

from so valiant a bird, indicated the extraordinary heroism of its wearer, whether they were particularly acquainted with the habits of his feathered sponsor, which was not then often to be found in New England, or whether indeed they understood or attended to any thing which fell from their captive's lips, did not distinctly appear. They contented themselves simply in answer to each successive exclamation, with the normal grunt of their race, which might have indicated approbation, dissent, reproof, or any thing else that happened to be in their minds. At all events, the unfortunate Doryfall did not seem likely at that moment to effect his liberation, which probably was the object to which tended his incessant vociferations.

While these matters were going on more rapidly than has been related, for indeed the whole contest which has taken us so long to recite, had occupied but a few minutes, Peter Cakebread had again scrambled to the top of the oak, upon which he was perched, to take a survey of the surrounding country, while one of the savages, he, namely, who had so adroitly nailed the blacksmith to the tree with his arrow, crept cautiously to the edge of the thicket, and placed his ear to the ground. Scarcely had he done so, when he started to his feet again with a yell of triumph, and dashed furiously back, hatchet in hand, towards the wigwam. At the same moment Cakebread uttered a shrill cry of disappointment and terror from the summit of the tree.

"What ails thee now, thou liverless child of Satan?" cried the blacksmith, standing upon the defensive again, while Bootefish seized the tomahawk which had been discharged at the commencement of the conflict and buried in the tree.

"What ails thee now, that thou howlest so dismally? What seest thou in yonder thicket to scare thee out of thy senses again?"

Before Cakebread had time to reply to the blacksmith's interrogation, the cause of his dismay and of the savage's exul-

tation was explained. A party of Indians, numbering eight or ten, commanded by a chief who appeared to be of considerable importance, broke suddenly from the thicket which fringed the plain, and advanced rapidly towards the scene of action. At this unexpected reinforcement, the three savages, who had been quite satisfied with the length of the contest, and who would have been well pleased to have got rid of the blacksmith and his truculent friend, now plucked up heart again, and leaving the captive Doryfall to guard himself at the entrance to their wigmam, they renewed the attack with the assurance of an easy victory. Bootefish and the blacksmith, each placed himself against a tree, prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Retreat was out of the question, for the party who had just emerged from the wood which extended along the western and northern verge of the plain, and crowned the neighboring heights, effectually surrounded them in the rear, and the sea which spread before them upon the southern and eastern side, cut off all escape in front. One of the three savages now advanced very near to the blacksmith, executing a very furious and warlike dance before his face, yelling with ferocity, and taunting him with a variety of irritating gestures. The smith, convinced that there was nothing to be gained by remaining stationary any longer, feeling a far stronger inclination to exchange his own life for that of two or three of his foes, than to stand still to become the captive and the laughing-stock of creatures for whom he had a hearty contempt, desperate at this evil stroke of fortune after he had considered his victory secure, and lashed into fury by the insulting grimaces of the savage, now abandoned all idea of defence, and leaving the covert of the tree, rushed madly at his antagonist, waving aloft his sledge-hammer.

The savage, whose brains would have been dashed out if he had stood still an instant longer, took to his heels as Walford

advanced, and fled in the direction of the wood. The smith pursued, but with less rapidity, his fugitive foe, and in so doing, found himself directly in the centre of the plain, separated from any protecting tree, and offering a mark for half a dozen arrows, which were immediately discharged at him by the new comers, and which inflicted two or three flesh wounds. He paused, foaming with rage, and eyeing his antagonists, who were thus goading him at the same time that they remained out of his reach, with the fury of a baited and wounded bull. His career seemed at an end; the savage who had provoked him was already surrounded by his friends, an arrow in the leg impeded the smith's advance, and as he stood there a defenceless mark, one of the new comers, who was the only one provided with a fire-arm, suddenly advanced to within twenty yards of him, and levelled his piece at his breast. The smith's hour was come. He was to die at last like a wolf in the wilderness, and what would become of the old woman on the hill yonder. He cursed his folly, which had tempted him forth from his fortress in behalf of the riotous crew, who had disturbed his solitude that morning; he cursed the fate which had sent the new party of redskins thither, when he had so fairly routed the first; he cursed ten thousand times the carelessness which had sent him out without his trusty fire-arm, which alone would have made him more than a match for the whole of them.

"Fire away," he roared with the voice of a lion, "ye greasy villains, and stop your chattering; 'tis a brave deed surely, for a dozen Indians to get the better of two Englishmen, for as to yon trussed chicken yonder ———" The report of a matchlock interrupted him as he shouted his defiance. Strange to say, it seemed to come from an opposite direction, and scarcely had the sound broken upon his ear, when the savage who was so nearly threatening his life, suddenly sprang high into the air, uttering a quick, sharp cry, and then rolled dead upon the

plain, his gun exploding harmlessly as he fell. At the same instant two figures sprang rapidly forward from the eastern edge of the plain, both armed with long, heavy matchlocks, and advancing near enough to be easily recognised, stationed themselves each behind a tree at a short distance from the blacksmith.

"Fairly shot, Sir Kit, by Jupiter Diespiter," said the shorter of the two as he coolly took aim at the nearest savage, who was however several hundred yards' distant; while Sir Christopher, to whose ready hand and skilful eye the blacksmith's preservation was owing, rapidly re-loaded his piece. At the same moment Walford darted gallantly forward, and notwithstanding the discharge of a half dozen arrows, succeeded in seizing the musket of the savage whom Gardiner had slain, and in tearing his ammunition pouch from his body. Armed with these, and without receiving a single additional wound, he hastily took up a position behind an oak, not far removed from his two confederates.

"Hold your hand, Morton, for an instant," said the knight, as he saw Morton preparing to fire. "'T is but a waste of powder — yonder fellows are out of your reach at present, and unless I mistake the matter, will be in no hurry to come to nearer quarters; my life for it, they have been provoked to this, for I know their temper well. At all events, here be three of us, with good weapons in our hands, and a fit match, I take it, for yonder round dozen of painted vagabonds. Pause a moment and observe their motions — you know how deeply important I consider it to secure the good-will of the savages in this neighborhood. Had not our trusty giant yonder been in such imminent peril, I would not have hurt a hair of their heads. Pause a moment and watch their conduct. By saint John, methinks they show a marvellous inclination to skulk into the covert yonder."

"They are deliberating, Sir Christopher — taking grave and

deep counsel; I obey you, and await the result of their cogitations." With this the Lord of Merry-Mount lowered his weapon and leaned coolly against the tree.

"But look at the giant of Mishawum, Sir Christopher," he resumed, "with an arrow sticking in each leg! Tell me now, looks he not like a feathered Mercury, with the talaria on his heels — save that he is perhaps a trifle stout for sailing through the air. Why he hath arrows enow in his legs to furnish Robin Hood. Had he but a bow now, he were as well equipped an archer as ever trod the merry green wood. And yet what recks he of bows or arrows? 'Non eget Mauris jaculis neque arcu,' for hath he not possessed himself of pouch and matchlock from yonder stiffening savage? But how camest thou to see in one half second the whole state of the matter, and to drop yonder unfortunate savage so promptly?"

"Experience, Master Morton," answered the knight, "experience, from earliest childhood to the present moment, has been tutoring me. When danger threatens, never lay about you in the dark. Trust me, a man with his eyes wide open is worth a dozen heedless fellows who rush upon danger blindfold."

While these events had been taking place, or rather just before the very opportune arrival of Morton and Gardiner, the valorous butler, who had been severely bruised during the progress of the affray, and was well nigh exhausted by his extraordinary efforts, had been captured at last by the two remaining Indians of the first party, who had attacked him, the one with his bow and arrows, the other with a long hatchet-headed pole. They had now bound him again, and had dragged him to the neighborhood of the wigwam, where he now sat upon the ground very near the Canary Bird, looking the image of dogged resolution.

"Ah, look yonder, Sir Christopher," continued Morton, after a little pause, during which the savages seemed to be still deliberating whether to attack or to hold a parley with the three

Englishmen. "Ah, look yonder at my paragon of precentors, my most bibulous of butlers, my most bandy-legged of Bootefishes, taken he is, captured, in durance vile. There too lies the luckless Canary Bird by his side, picked, trussed, and ready for roasting; and yonder sneaks back Humphrey Rednape with the pouch on his shoulders according to your command. This way, Humphrey Rednape, or the red devils will add you to the brace yonder. Sneak this way man," continued Morton, as Rednape, who, as will be remembered, had fled early from the field of battle, but who had in reality been the cause of the favorable turn which things had taken, by the information which he had conveyed to Morton and Gardiner, of whose whereabouts he happened to be informed, now stole forward with a large pouch of ammunition upon his shoulder, and a fire-arm in his hand.

"These savages are peaceably disposed," said Gardiner, suddenly. "I have no doubt on the subject. Down with your piece, you mistake me. No more killing. They have not the least appetite for gunpowder remaining. 'T is much more to my purpose to deal gently with them. They respect me and fear me; 't is time that they should love me. Moreover, I recognise their chief—'t is Sagamore John, as well disposed a fellow as can be found in the bay. My life for it, he comes half way to welcome me as soon as I am recognised."

With these words the knight, to Morton's profound astonishment, left the cover of the tree with his matchlock carelessly lying in the hollow of his arm, and coolly advanced to within fifty yards of the second party of Indians, who had been standing huddled together in earnest conversation since the fall of their first champion. Half a dozen bows were lifted in an instant, half a dozen arrows were drawn to the head, while Morton, transfixed with wonder, stood gazing at the incomprehensible fool-hardiness of the knight, when suddenly, at a word of command, the weapons were all lowered, and the chief of the

party uttering a shrill cry of recognition, advanced forward to meet the Englishman, proffering his hand, and making a hundred gestures and unintelligible protestations of friendship.

The sagamore was a young man, tall and well limbed, like most of their other warriors, and wore a variety of ingeniously painted devices upon his arms and bust. A robe of magnificent beaver skins hung from his shoulder, a girdle of wampum was around his waist, and he held a tomahawk in his hand. Like all the other savages who had appeared upon the scene, he was equipped for peace, and had had no expectations that morning of a conflict of any kind. He had a good-humored, horse face, with an expression of considerable intelligence, and was evidently regarded by his companions with perfect respect. This was Sagamore John, a petty chieftain of a small body of natives who inhabited the neighborhood of Mishawum, and who were all subjects to the more extensive sovereignty of the Squaw Sachem of the Massachusetts.

Between this potentate and the knight, there had for a long time existed relations of perfect friendship and mutual esteem. During his residence in the Massachusetts, Sir Christopher had ably employed the long period of apparent inactivity to which the slow moving and somewhat recalcitrating operations of his confederates in England had condemned him, in establishing secret but extensive relations of amity with the chiefs of all the scattered tribes in the neighborhood of the territory, over which he eventually contemplated establishing his own sovereignty. His connections with them were widely ramified, and managed with the adroitness which was his distinguishing characteristic.

The sagamore and Sir Christopher exchanged salutations. In a few hurried expressions, which were inaudible to the other parties, and by a careless gesture of the knight towards the savage who had fallen by his hand, it was evident that he had explained his own part in the transaction. Desirous of investi-

gating the original cause of the affray, he seemed willing to pr long his interview with the sagamore. All appearances of ho tility having ceased on both sides, the other Indians retired t themselves for the present to the vicinity of the wigwam, whe they resumed the interrupted preparations for their feast; whi Morton and Walford together proceeded to liberate the two ca tives Bootefish and Doryfall, and then withdrew to the vicini of the beach to hold deliberation.

"Beshrew me," said the blacksmith to the knight, "but yo seem marvellously to understand yourself with my friend t sagamore yonder. A man of pith he is, and no skulker; an by the beard of my father, I would not have valued your life at farthing when you marched out upon them just now. To t sure, their arrows be mighty clumsy tools," continued the gian who had been amusing himself, since the cessation of hostilitie with extracting the stone points of the darts, which, as we hav seen, had inflicted several annoying although trifling wound upon his person — "to be sure, they be mighty clumsy tools, u less the game be cocksparrows; and look ye, I be somethin bigger and tougher than a cocksparrow," he concluded, co temptuously tossing the weapons which had galled him upon th ground.

"Aye," said Morton, replying in the careless humor whic was habitual with him, to the observations of Walford, whic Gardiner, engaged in colloquy with the sachem, did not appe to heed. "Aye, master smith, thou seest that our worth friend Sir Christopher is even more closely allied to his highne Sagamore John, even than thy gigantic self. The devil a b would yonder cocksparrow archers have dropped their weapon at thy command, or even at mine, suzerain of Passanogessi though they know know me to be. See what it is to be bor with the jewel of command in your eye, as a beaver with priceless treasure in his tail. And truly this Sagamore John, a

he delights to style himself — thanks to his highness, by the way, for eschewing his savage name, which would crack our jaws worse than his tomahawk or thy sledge-hammer, and into more pieces than it hath syllables — truly John is a very agreeable young man."

"Aye," answered the smith, who had troubled himself but little with savage pedigrees or politics, "'t is as pretty a fellow in a squabble as one would care to meet with of a summer's day. A great chieftain he is, to be sure, and the Lord of all these parts I believe — may they have never a worse one."

"Poh, nonsense, thou most careless and uninstructed giant," answered Morton, "thy ignorance of the genealogy and political history of the tribes among whom thou hast pitched thy tent, is lamentable. Know, then, that yonder dignified red-skin, with the wholesome name of John, is but a satrap, a prefect, under the mighty personage who rules these savage realms. Know that this whole country of the Massachusetts obeys the sovereignty of an illustrious squaw. This squaw sachem is the dowager of the lamented Nanepashemit, or the New Moon, which New Moon being brought into unlucky conjunction with certain Tarrantine tomahawks, was suddenly eclipsed somewhere in the year of our Lord 1619. He left behind four lesser satellites, three sons and a daughter — one of the sons, the respectable young man now before us, whose pagan name, Wonohaquahan, I will for once venture to pronounce, has command over some twenty or thirty warriors, while his brothers possess a similar authority farther towards the east, but the dowager, the Saunks, hath succeeded to the throne, and exercises despotic sway over her sons and subjects."

"Master smith," suddenly interrupted Gardiner, turning from the sagamore, "what began the riot this morning? That is the matter to be looked to now."

"Faith, Sir Christopher, the devil a bit can I instruct you on

the subject. Four drunken vagabonds of the pious crew, harbored by our friend Master Morton here, paid me a visit this morning. I should have said three vagabonds, for yonder Robin Bootefish hath this day borne himself so like a man of mettle, that he shall be damned before he hears hard names again from Thomas Walford; aye, or hard knocks either," said the smith, extending his hand towards the doughty butler. That individual who by a kind of miracle had escaped unwounded, though marvellously bruised, from his various adventures that morning, and who had been refreshing himself during the interval afforded by the historical disquisition of Morton, with a quiet nap in the sun, had aroused himself at the voice of the blacksmith, and now listened with gratification to this encomium upon his conduct.

"Thanks to you, worthy Goodman Walford," said he with stately but sincere cordiality, as he arose from his recumbent position, and extended a hand to the blacksmith.

"Thanks to you, master blacksmith, and truly I be well pleased that the individual whom you chose to honor with the name of lobster, and mayhap to handle somewhat more roughly than was necessary, one fine morning, hath had opportunity to show the stuff he be made-of."

As the butler paused for breath, Gardiner, who had become impatient at this effusion of sentiment on the part of the butler and smith, now repeated his inquiry as to the cause of the conflict.

"If your worship, Master Morton, will allow," resumed the butler, "I can explain to Sir Christopher the whole of the matter in about six words."

"Out with it, man," said Sir Christopher impatiently, "methinks it needs no urging."

"Well, then, know your worship," said the butler, "that the whole cause of this little riot with the red-breeches is all along of Peter Cakebread. He be a mischievous, idle varlet, as your

honor knows, ready to get a friend into trouble, and willing to let him get out of it for himself. Now you see, this Master Cakebread, as we landed from our boats at Mishawum this morning, chanced to find a canoe belonging to these very red-breeches snugly lying in the cove."

"I knew there was knavery at the beginning," cried Morton.

"There was a mighty bag of corn-meal in the boat," continued Bootefish, "and your worship knows that the devil a pinch of meal or flour has been at Merry-Mount these three months. There were also several measures of dried beans besides. Now what does my gentleman, Master Cakebread, but takes me this very bag of meal and these very dry beans, and pops me them into our boat, saying that we would have bread enow for May-day at Merry-Mount, or the devil was in it. I reproved him for it, your honor, and called him a vile thief. This made him laugh, hardened sinner that as he is, and without more ado, he shoved the empty canoe out upon the water, as if it was not enow to steal the contents thereof. As we were squabbling among ourselves, the red-breeches, who had from the hill-top discovered their canoe floating off into the bay, came down upon us, shrieking like devils, before we had put off in our skiff. As soon as they discovered Peter's knavery, you may be sure that they screamed and yelled all the louder. Now what does my little Canary Bird, when we found ourselves beset, but drop on his face and pipe for mercy. As for Peter Cakebread, the cause of all the mischief, why the devil even lent him his own wings, to fly away withal, for how else he could make his escape as he did, clean over the heads of us all, Christians and pagans, friends and foes, is more than Robert Bootefish can tell you. In the midst of our tussle upon the plain, up comes Goodman Walford, and the rest is known to your worship."

The worthy butler concluded his harangue, which, without more circumlocution than was to have been expected, had at

last instructed Morton and the knight as to the real cause of the quarrel, by a beaming glance of affection directed towards the smith.

"And now, where is this skulking Cakebread?" said the knight, "the culprit is known, and must be found and punished. Master Morton, I shall insist upon an exemplary chastisement as the only means of satisfying the savages' sense of justice."

"Right as Rhadamanthus," answered Morton, "but where has the knave bestowed himself?"

"I have already told thee, Master Morton," interrupted the smith, "that the creature hath been seen by me in the midst of the squabble. Flying in the air he was, like an imp of the old one, for Satan protects his children. But if he be any where outside the hottest cauldron in Beelzebub's kitchen, you'll find him upon yonder oak. Take him an' ye will, but by the Lord, I would not singe my fingers with his carcase to please the best Christian in the bay."

While the smith was speaking, the knight had already advanced to the oak under which the blacksmith had received the aerial communications from the offending Cakebread. The rest of the party followed him, and soon became aware of the presence of the luckless culprit, who ensconced among the topmost branches of the tree, sat grinning at them in defiance, and obstinately refusing to obey the knight's order to descend from his pinnacle, from a very shrewd suspicion of the treatment he was likely to meet with.

"I knew we should find the culprit at last," exclaimed Morton. "Cakebread, Peter Cakebread, thy sins must be atoned for, and that speedily. Of this thou mightest have been sure, ere thou becamest a corn-stealer, for punishment, sooner or later, surely overtaketh the guilty. What says my friend Flaccus upon this point?

'Raro antecedentem scelestum
Deseruit pede Pœna claudo.'

Which for thy better apprehension is, 'Punishment with her club-foot, will yet overtake the nimblest and most thievish baboon.' Have the kindness, then, to come down and be whipped.—'Valet ima summis mutare.' Leave thy infernal mopping and mowing and descend."

Master Cakebread, however, seemed little inclined to obey the behest of his liege lord and sovereign, and remained in his elevated position, looking very malicious, very obstinate, and very much frightened withal.

The knight became now very impatient, and shouted to him in a voice whose peremptory tones seemed to produce an instantaneous effect upon the culprit.

"I tell thee to descend from the tree, and that instantly, thou misbegotten child of Satan; it were better for thee to obey my commands without hesitation; for I swear to thee if thou palterest with me ten seconds longer, the tree shall be felled to the ground, and thyself delivered over to the savages whom thou hast plundered, to be dealt with according to their pleasure. Obey me instantly and thou shalt be chastised, indeed, but thou shalt be protected from the vengeance of the Indians."

This last threat, or rather the mixtures of threats and promises, seemed to have its effect upon the culprit. He began slowly to descend from the summit of the tree, and when he had reached the lowermost branch of all, he sat himself quietly down for a moment, at about ten feet elevation above their heads, and seemed disposed to enter into a parley with the imperious knight.

"Worthy and most valiant Sir Christopher," he began in a fawning and suppliant manner, "thou knowest that bread is the staff of life, and that ——"

"Now by St. John," cried the knight in a towering passion, "if thou darest to utter one single word of expostulation, or delayest one single second longer thy descent to the ground, I

swear I will shoot thee as I would a fox, and give thy carcase to the Indians in exchange for their poor devils who have been knocked on the head in consequence of thy misdemeanor."

As he spoke, the knight lifted his matchlock to his shoulder, and deliberately covered the body of the trembling culprit. Cakebread knowing with whom he had to deal, and finding Sir Christopher thus indisposed to trifle, made no more ado, but turning a sumerset, which did honor to his early education, he alighted upon his feet in the very midst of the group, wearing a ludicrous expression of mingled fear, malice, and curiosity upon his wizzened features.

The knight seized him by the throat in an instant, and then making a sign to Rednape and Bootefish to approach, he handed the culprit to them, with orders to bind him closely with a cord which Rednape held in his hands.

The unfortunate Cakebread fell upon his knees, for he believed that the knight had determined to execute him at once without judge or jury, by suspending him to the branch of the tree which hung so conveniently a few feet above his head. The frightened culprit fell upon his knees and roared for mercy.

"Have compassion upon me, thou most humane and puissant knight, and thou, too, my honored lord and sovereign, most worshipful Master Morton," he cried, with his teeth chattering as he spoke; "truly have I done nothing but abstract a little superfluous provender from the savages. I did but forage upon the enemy as a Christian warrior should. Bread is the staff of life, and for the lack of it must we die, and yet be hanged for procuring it?"

"Gag the cowardly driveller," said the knight impatiently to Bootefish and Rednape; "and know, thou unlucky and most thievish imp, that there is no question of hanging. Chastised thou shalt be; whipped, and that soundly, to appease the vengeance of

the Indians, and to furnish them an additional proof of the justice that Englishmen know how to render, even when their own countrymen must bear the pain and the shame. Master Morton, have the kindness to summon the savages from yonder wigwam."

"Willingly, Sir Kit," answered Morton, "but permit me before I do so to make a suggestion, — Is it certain that it would not be better to hang the culprit ——?"

Here the unfortunate Cakebread struggled violently to speak, and to throw himself upon his knees, but the gag and cords prevented, and Morton proceeded,—

"Would it not be better to hang the culprit, or at least a culprit? If Cakebread be too valuable a subject for me to lose, and I confess his many excellent social qualities have endeared him very much to the society of Merry-Mount, why I am not sure that I could not find among the more aged and weather-beaten veterans of the crew, a worthy substitute for the gallows. There is a fellow in my mind just now, a huge feeder, who dwells at Merry-Mount, and hath done so for years, who is old, blind, deaf, and altogether of no value to me or to any body; what sayest thou, Sir Kit, suppose we discharge Master Cakebread from custody and send forthwith for my venerable friend and hang him vicariously to yonder branch, in presence of the savages? My life for it, they will be most salutarily impressed by so imposing a spectacle."

"Tush, Morton," said Gardiner, who, although impatient at this delay in executing his orders, treated the Sachem of Merry-Mount, as he always did even in his most whimsical moments, with considerable deference. "Tush, Morton, thou triflest too unseasonably; I have determined, that although this actual offence be not very grave in amount, yet that this practice of pilfering by white men upon Indians is likely to bring us into contempt, and that it is necessary to make an example of this

fellow, who, as thou hast thyself informed me, has been guilty of such tricks before. He must be chastised in presence of the Indians, and that at once."

Cakebread, who, in spite of his cords, had contrived to execute a hampered dance of rapture, and to emit certain smothered and unnatural sounds indicative of his intense delight at Morton's proposition, and his unqualified approval of this project of a vicarious punishment, now received a smart rap on the head from Bootefish, to induce a more reverential demeanor, while Sir Christopher continued,—

"If you will have the kindness to call yonder savages together, and will simply appoint your servant Bootefish yonder to the temporary office of executioner, I will, without farther delay, see that a proper chastisement is meted out to this culprit, which will be sufficient as an example, but which will hardly prevent him from fulfilling his duties as principal buffoon, so long as he can find greater fools than himself to laugh at his folly."

"Robertus Bootefish!" suddenly exclaimed Morton, upon finding by the knight's determined manner, that the matter must be forthwith settled,—"Robertus Bootefish, thou art hereby authorized by the command of thy suzerain, to take upon thyself, in addition to thy other responsible offices of butler, precentor, and head clerk, the dignity of carnifex maximus, which is in the vernacular, head executioner, not only for the present but for all future time, and thou art hereby instructed to hold thyself in readiness to execute the penalty of the law according to the behest of the illustrious knight, Sir Christopher Gardiner, upon the body of the culprit, Petrus Panificium, or, in the vulgar, Peter Cakebread, upon this very spot and at this very moment of time. Dixi."

The worthy Bootefish, who had been well aware of the result towards which all this parley was tending, and who was nothing loth to inflict upon the sneaking comrade who had well nigh,

through his knavery, cost him his life, a proper chastisement, which he regarded as rather due to his unmanly flight from the battle-field than for the larceny, had already prepared a formidable whip, and now came forward with considerable alacrity in obedience to the order of his august master.

The savages were immediately summoned, and squatted themselves gravely upon their hams, forming a circle around their chief, who received from Morton and Gardiner a rapid and succinct account of the matter from the beginning to the end, and expressed himself thoroughly satisfied with the penalty proposed. The luckless Cakebread was then unbound and led forward by Rednape and the Canary Bird into the centre of the circle, when he dropped upon his knees and with chattering teeth and streaming eyes made a full confession of his guilt, accompanied by many whining appeals for mercy. He was, however, promptly condemned to receive forty lashes immediately; and although his fears had perhaps anticipated a far more fearful penalty, he again attempted by a variety of hideous howls, to obtain a mitigation of punishment. Finding all his efforts in vain, after casting an imploring but ineffectual look at Morton, he permitted himself to be seized by Rednape and Doryfall. As soon, however, as they had taken him by the arms, he dropped heavily upon the ground, affecting to have fallen into a swoon, and lay motionless and apparently as senseless as a log. At a look from Gardiner, Bootefish advanced to assist the others and they then lifted him from the earth in their arms, where he lay like a man, from whom all the bones had been suddenly extracted, with his lithe and supple frame swaying and twisting in every direction like a dead serpent. As they carried him past Gardiner, however, he opened his eyes and directed one demoniac glance of mingled fear, rage and hatred, which was worthy of the countenance of a fiend, and which might have inspired a more susceptible mind than the knight's with a sensation of

terror. Sir Christopher, however, appeared not even to observe the expression of the imp whose hatred he was at that moment incurring, and who, contemptible as he seemed, possessed venom and determination sufficient to inflict a signal vengeance upon the author of his punishment, if the opportunity should occur.

The abject creature was now tied by the neck and shoulders to a young hickory, and the forty lashes were laid on with a hearty good-will, and with solemn composure, by Bootefish. The first stroke aroused the culprit from his affected torpor, and elicited a howl which resounded among the wooded crags of the surrounding wilderness. At the second he began to dance about with extraordinary vivacity, and throughout the whole chastisement he performed a series of wonderful gyrations about the tree, accompanied with frantic but unsuccessful struggles to escape from his bonds. When the last blow had been struck, and the echo of the last howl had died away among the cliffs of Mishawum, the savages, at Gardiner's request, were drawn up in a double line, the cords which secured the culprit were unbound, and he was ordered in conclusion to run the gauntlet through them, and to receive a swinging thwack from every one of them as he passed. As soon, however, as he was liberated, he dropped again like a torpid snake upon the earth, and appeared entirely inanimate from the effects of his punishment; upon Gardner's stirring his prostrate carcase with his foot, however, and threatening him with an additional allowance of stripes upon the failure of instant obedience, he jumped upon his legs and proceeded cautiously to the head of the line. Here, as he was attempting to steal quietly by the first post of danger, he was received by a hearty knock from the flat side of a hatchet; when, suddenly recovering his powers, as if by enchantment, and exerting the whole of his extraordinary muscular agility, he bounded into the air, threw a somerset clean over the heads of

his enemies, and then fled swiftly across the plain. At the command of their chief, the savages desisted from the pursuit which they had at once commenced; and all parties being thoroughly satisfied with the penalty inflicted, and with the general result of the morning's operations, they severally dispersed to their respective destinations.

CHAPTER XII.

TWILIGHT MYSTERIES.

LATE in the afternoon of the same day, Esther Ludlow, who was walking alone very near her own door, was surprised to see the tall figure of Sir Christopher Gardiner crossing the glade and approaching the house. The knight appeared no longer in the gay attire which he had worn in the morning and throughout the scenes in which we have found him engaged, but appeared again in the sad-colored suit, and wearing the steeple-crowned hat which marked the Puritan. His demeanor and bearing were no less altered, and it would have been difficult for the keenest observer to have discovered in the grave and measured deportment, the meek and gentle voice, and the calm and somewhat melancholy countenance of the personage who was now exchanging salutations with Esther Ludlow, any trace of the mnn of action whom we left so lately upon the plain of Mishawum.

"I have taken the liberty to intrude once more upon your presence," said he, with a demure glance at Esther, which was quickly withdrawn as her eyes met his own, "because, since I last parted from you I have received letters, which confirm the tidings which you somewhat briefly imparted to me, the last time we met. Believing that in all probability your own dispatches might not yet have been delivered, I have come to proffer whatever information I may have obtained for your own use."

"I thank you for your courtesy," replied Esther coldly, for she was not too well pleased with the knight's visit, and felt a strange trouble, she knew not why, at his presence; "I thank

you respectfully, but the letters which have been delivered to my brother and myself from our friends in England, have fully instructed us as to the course of events in England, and as to the particular details of the matters most interesting to the dwellers in the wilderness."

"Then I have only to express to you," replied the knight, my sincere congratulations at the auspicious tidings. Before another three months shall have elapsed, we may hope to see the commencement of a religious settlement, the laying of the corner-stone of a permanent asylum for the persecuted. I know how much of pure and sublime happiness such an event must excite in your breast. I sincerely trust that you will not be offended that a lonely and unworthy wayfarer like myself, ventures to express to you his sympathy with a cause which he knows to be nearest to your heart."

"It lies doubtless very near to my heart," replied Esther, who was somewhat softened to the stranger by his apparently fervid interest in the cause to which she had devoted herself, but whose mind, pre-occupied at that moment by deep and melancholy regrets at the recent demeanor of her absent lover, was but little open to any strong impression from the language of the man who was now addressing her. "It lies doubtless very near to my heart, and I am truly impatient that the expected ships should arrive. Still my mind at times misgives me, whether obstacles may not, after all, occur during these troublous times, which may make their endeavors fruitless."

"Not so, believe me," answered her companion, who, as will be explained hereafter, had already made up his mind as to the line of conduct he was to pursue for the present, having now received the instructions which he had been so eagerly expecting from his confederates in England. "I have reason to believe that the good work is likely to go on and prosper. Such is the tenor of the advices which I have received from my own friends,

and such, doubtless, must be the hopes held forth in your correspondence."

"I cannot tell," answered Esther, whose manner became distant again, in spite of herself, as she found the knight desirous of protracting the interview without any apparent cause. "Our enemies in England are powerful and malignant, and I fear they may send emissaries to the wilderness to impede our cherished work."

"But the friends of the colony at home are powerful and influential," replied the knight, who was gazing with a look of undisguised admiration at the fair face of his companion. He checked himself suddenly, however, and remembering that passionate words and bold glances but ill comported with the stern and grave character which he had assumed, he added in an altered tone, "Believe me when I assure you that you have but little to fear from the machinations of the enemies whom you deem so powerful. As to the emissaries to whom you allude, I doubt very much their existence; certainly I have found but few persons in whose sincere attachment to our great religious enterprise, I could not confide as much as in my own."

"And yet," said Esther, who was still more and more desirous to terminate the interview with the mysterious personage, who inspired her with an unaccountable feeling of distrust, but unwilling to be absolutely discourteous to a man whom she knew her brother regarded with respect, — "I fear me that, among the wild and lawless spirits who inhabit the south-western coasts of Massachusetts, there be many who are both evil wishers and evil doers. Strange tales reach our ears, of godless and profane ribaldry in those regions, which would be in itself sufficient to bring a curse and a desolation upon the land."

"If you speak of the rioters and worthless revellers of Passanogessit," answered Gardiner, "you may dismiss any fears as to evil influence from such a source; believe me, that crew of

outcasts is too contemptible and too insignificant in every manner, to merit a thought. They will be swept away like the foul and noisome mists of the morass yonder, before the clear sunlight of religion which is so soon to rise upon this benighted land. Let but your brave and energetic people arrive, and you will see them shrink away like owls, and bats, and foul things, which fear the light of day. Profane not, beautiful Esther Ludlow," added the knight with another look of earnest and irrepressible, but respectful admiration, "profane not your serene thoughts, by allowing them to wander to subjects so infinitely below your own exalted sphere."

The passionate glances of the knight fell upon the beautiful Puritan as harmlessly as tropical sunshine upon a marble statue. With a cold and unembarrassed look, which almost disconcerted him, she replied, —

"I am willing to receive your account of them, Sir Knight, and to participate in the hopefulness with which you seem to regard the undertaking of which we were speaking, but the air is growing chill and the evening is approaching. I regret that my brother's absence must make me appear uncourteous, in not inviting you to partake of the humble hospitality of our roof, and I must even crave your permission to retire."

Gardiner was not the man to be abashed by a repulse as decided as this seemed to be, and he still lingered at the door-step, ready and yet reluctant to take leave; thus detaining, for a few moments, his companion, who was naturally unwilling to withdraw into the house until he had departed.

It was a strange but not unaccountable attraction, which had exerted so sudden an influence upon the knight's imagination. It should, moreover, be never lost sight of, that although the scenery of this tale is found in the stern deserts of New England, yet that the actors were all Europeans, born and reared among all the influences of an ancient civilization, and sub-

jected to all the conflicting, turbulent and chequered sentiments, motives, and passions, which beset human nature when developed under the exciting atmosphere of a high social culture. Such almost wilful contrasts are not the least remarkable features in the singular scene presented upon the opening pages of New England's chronicle.

"I purpose visiting our brethren at New Plymouth very shortly," said he, as he found Esther determined to abridge their interview, "and I should be well pleased if in aught I could be serviceable to you. I have tarried long enough among them, to know that you have heaped upon your head the blessings of those who were nigh to perish, and that your departure has been bitterly lamented by the poorer of the brethren and their families in that sterile spot of earth. Is there naught in which I can be useful to you?"

"I thank you for your courtesy," said Esther, advancing a few steps towards him, "for I do remember me, that there is a family there which truly demands my care. A certain weaver from Suffolkshire, who emigrated to these shores during the past year, and who has been sojourning at New Plymouth, is, I believe, still tarrying there. He is feeble in health, and not overburdened with capacity for this wilderness work. Commend me to him, and advise him, in my name, to tarry still a little with the brethren of Plymouth. Delays still attend the enterprise of the settlement at Naumkeak. He must at this time be suffering many pangs of poverty, and perhaps illness, for he has a considerable family. Sir Knight, I shall even accept your courteous offer, and entreat you to convey to this poor weaver whose name is Mellowes, a small token of my remembrance with an assurance of my continued interest in his welfare."

Esther went into the house for a moment, and presently returned. "There are a very few gold pieces in this purse," said she, extending it to him, "but they are all which are at present

at my command, and more than sufficient to save my poor friends from absolute starvation. If, however, want should continue to press upon them, they may be able to procure the necessaries of life by means of this useless gaud, which I pray you to convey to the Goodwife Mellowes, with the assurance that the trifling gewgaw is not sent to be worn as a piece of worldly apparel, but to be exchanged for the necessaries of life, when they shall find themselves sorely beset."

As Esther spoke, she took from her neck a heavy gold chain which she wore studiously concealed beneath the folds of her folds of her garments, and delivered it to the knight.

"And now Sir Knight," she concluded, "once more imploring your pardon for my withdrawal, I shall even bid you farewell."

She entered the humble cottage as she spoke, and closed the door behind her. The knight stood stock still for a moment, gazing enraptured at her retiring figure. He then advanced a few steps across the glade, when he suddenly paused and leaned musingly against the trunk of an oak which stood on the verge of the forest. He lifted the chain to his lips, and kissed it passionately many times, and then fastened it round his neck. As he did so, a smile of indefinite triumph shone for an instant across his dark features.

The brown shadows of evening were fast descending upon the landscape, and objects were already growing indistinct in the twilight. The knight still leaned against the tree, lost in a vague but delicious reverie. He believed himself alone in that wilderness, but he was wrong. Within a few paces of him, but concealed by the heavy branches of the very tree against which he was leaning, stood the dusky figure of a man. He stood with his eyes glaring fearfully upon the knight, his hand clenching a naked rapier, his breath suspended, and his features and whole frame convulsed by fierce, but resolutely suppressed emotion. The man who stood in ambush there was no savage,

although he was thirsting for the heart's blood of his enemy, and was delaying with an almost voluptuous sensation of hatred, the moment of gratification, which fate seemed at last to have placed within his reach. That man was Henry Maudsley. He had arrived at the spot a few moments before, with his heart filled with regret and remorse for what had seemed to him in his cooler moments, the unjust and unworthy suspicion which had fastened so uncontrollably upon his soul at his last interview with Esther.

After that last interview he had been hardly able to explain even to himself the sudden and stormy passions which had overflowed his heart like a torrent, when he first learned the existence of what he believed to be an intimacy between the knight and his beloved. From that moment a demon seemed to have assumed dominion over him, and he had struggled in vain against the fearful influence. He had, however, during the many solitary hours of absence which had passed since he had left Esther so deeply wounded as his unseemly outbreak of anger and jealousy, found a little time to reflect upon his conduct and situation. Although still unable to shake off the indistinct fears which weighed like lead upon his spirit, he had, however, schooled himself into believing that he was perhaps the victim of his own imagination, and had so far prevailed over his hot temper and his pride as to form the resolution to seek once more an interview with Esther. He would once more, he thought, appeal to the old friendship between them; he would once more, but with more eloquent appeals than the tame language with which, as it now seemed to him, he had last urged his suit, again endeavor to tear her from the desolation in which she had made her home, would once more, and in bold and irresistible terms, warn her of the dangerous character of the unworthy knight whom she had admitted to her acquaintance. Should he find his first suspicions as baseless as he fondly prayed that they might prove,

he would upon his knees implore her forgiveness, that he should have dared to profane the purity of her mind with the breath of his suspicions. If, however, he should find that those boding thoughts which still haunted him could not be dispelled by her presence, he would at any rate bid her farewell in a spirit more worthy both of her character and his own. Having once formed this resolution, he had, with the headlong impatience of his character, been unable to rest till he had fulfilled it. With a bosom beating high with renewed hope, he had devoured the rugged and difficult tract of wilderness which still separated him from her, and had paused a moment within the edge of the thicket which fringed the glade before her door, to collect his whirling thoughts, and to calm his feverish brain.

At that very moment, as he thus paused, in full view of that lowly door-step, but himself screened from sight by the protecting branches of the tree, he had been an involuntary witness to the concluding moments of Esther's interview with the hated and mysterious adventurer. He stood there transfixed, gazing as mute and motionless upon the face of that fair Puritan, as if, like the loveliness of the fabled Medusa, it possessed the power to transform him to stone, while, as in that fearful fable, a thousand serpents sprang from the life's blood which seemed slowly dropping from his heart. He stood there, like one enchanted, too distant to hear the low accents of Mabel, and with his whole soul concentrated in his eyes He stood rooted to that spot, and an earthquake would hardly have aroused him. He heard not, spoke not, scarcely breathed, but he saw all that passed. He saw Esther place the chain in Gardiner's hand; he saw him kiss the sacred pledge of affection, accursed hypocrite that he was, and then place it next his heart; he saw his smile of gratitude; he saw Esther's lips breathing the gentle accents of farewell; he saw the long, audacious glance, with which the knight dwelt upon her retiring form; he saw his smile of triumph

as he advanced, in slow and rapturous self communion as it seemed, directly towards the tree which sheltered his own figure. He saw all this, and stood motionless. He suppressed even his breath as he saw his hated rival striding so closely to him. The knight paused at last, and leaned against the tree. Maudsley was so near that he might almost touch him; he saw the chain glittering upon his breast, he could almost see the bright and soaring thoughts, which he knew were swarming and singing their triumphal music in his brain. They were alone together in the wilderness, with only the stars to look down upon them, and his hand clutched the hilt of his sword convulsively, as he felt that if the hour of certainty and of despair had struck, that the hour of vengeance, too, had sounded. He stood there gazing upon the face of his successful rival, and resolved, as he studied the lineaments of that dark and impassible physiognomy, that he would calm himself before he addressed him, because he knew the self-balanced character of his antagonist, and was unwilling to confront the man who was always master of himself, while his own reason was well nigh blinded by his passion. He stood there striving in vain to compose himself, for a few rapid moments, and remembering that the spot where they now stood was too near the abode of Ludlow, and therefore unfitted for the work which they were soon to have in hand, he determined to accost Sir Christopher tranquilly that they might remove together to a more appropriate place. While Maudsley was thus hesitating, the knight suddenly aroused himself from his reverie, and, with rapid movements, strode away from the tree in the direction of the coast. Maudsley, forgetting his resolution of calmness, and furious lest his prey should escape him, sprang madly forward, calling out to his enemy in a low, husky tone, choked with emotion, which was inaudible to the rapidly retreating and unconscious Gardiner. At the same moment his arm was suddenly clutched from behind, and his

progress towards his antagonist impeded. Thus assaulted, he turned upon his new enemy, raising his sword to cut down the skulking savage, by whom he supposed himself attacked. What was his surprise to see that his arm had been seized, and his career arrested by the hand of a fair, slight youth, who held a dagger indeed, but whose frame, though graceful, seemed so powerless compared to his own, that he lowered his uplifted sword, contenting himself with shaking off the arm which held him, while he gazed with a sudden emotion of wonder into the face of the youth.

"Spare him, spare him, Harry Maudsley," said the young stranger, in a voice which was wild with emotion. "Not to you, not to you belongs the task — you shall not escape me," he continued, clinging with all his strength to Maudsley, who strove in vain to cast him off, as he found that the form of Gardiner had already disappeared in the darkling forest. Enraged at this singular and unaccountable interruption, maddened to see his enemy thus eluding his grasp, and cursing the folly which had restrained him from dashing to the earth the slender creature who had thus stepped between him and his revenge, he once more turned to him.

"Now, by the God of Heaven," he cried, "I know not what prevents me, thou insolent stripling, from cleaving thee to the earth. Whence come ye, in the name of the foul fiend, who, I believe, hath sent you hither to balk me? whence come ye, what are ye, and why have you dared thus to lay violent hands upon me, and to interfere with my purposes? Speak, or even this slender frame shall not ———."

Maudsley interrupted himself as he spoke, for his face was now close to his companion's, and there was something fearful in the expression of the stripling's beautiful but distorted features, and in the wild light that gleamed from his eyes, with the yellowish, unnatural glare of a savage creature of the forest.

"Strike, if you will," said the youth, without the slightest indication of fear, as he looked contemptuously upon the threatening blade of Maudsley — "strike, if you will. My purpose is at least answered. The knight is already far beyond your reach. Strike, Harry Maudsley, think you I fear your anger! Alas! this heart of mine hath been more deeply struck this night than sword of yours could wound it. Strike, Harry Maudsley. Think ye my life's blood will be a love potion for ye to win back the heart of your fair and fickle Puritan?"

Maudsley chafing at this allusion to the wound which was festering in his bosom, and completely enraged that the interruption of the stranger had been, indeed, successful in compelling him to defer his vengeance upon Gardiner, exclaimed in a voice hoarse with passion —

"I hardly know why I pause, why I obey not your bold defiance, save that I scorn to strike at aught so feeble. What art thou, peevish boy, that thou hast dared thus to intercept my purposes, and even to goad me beyond endurance, by thy sharp and scornful language. But I cry your pardon, my gentle youth. Doubtless, you too are a suitor to yon fair and fickle Puritan, as you term her, and have learned by what you have seen this evening, how well such suit is like to prosper. Is it so? Tell me, and I will forgive thee for thy insolence."

The lad laughed a low, scornful laugh as he replied, looking as he did so, with an indefinitely taunting expression, upon the face of Maudsley. "No, truly, Master Maudsley, you are strangely deceived by your passion. Think you, then, that yonder marble face and stony heart, to which you yourself bow down in such hopeless adoration, have such an omnipotent charm, that all who look upon her in this savage wilderness must straightway kneel and worship? Oh, no, believe me, you frigid Puritan hath no charms for me."

"Insolent, presumptuous?" interrupted Maudsley, who, how

ever, was so impressed with the extraordinary apparition of this youth, whom he now looked upon for the first time, that he stood still and listened to him, with a curiosity excited by his mysterious appearance and language, that not even the tumultuous emotions that were raging in his bosom, could entirely extinguish. Who the singular stranger was, how he seemed to be so familiar with his name and person, how he was able thus to probe the secrets of his heart, whence he derived his strange power thus to taunt and dare him to his face, with such impunity, were questions which he asked himself but could not answer.

"No, Master Maudsley, no," continued the stranger, "neither insolent nor presumptuous. My words are meant in kindness, for God knows I would almost spare my deadliest enemy the pang of jealousy."

The youth's features were livid with emotion, and his voice grew hoarse and husky as he spoke, but he commanded himself again, and continued in a more gay but bitter tone,—

"No, no, Harry Maudsley, your wondrous Puritan hath no charms for me. I loathe the very name of Puritan, I hate their rigid looks, frigid hearts, and insolent sanctity, and for yonder daughter and fitting model of her whole dreary sect, I assure you I do esteem her well assorted in this gloomy wilderness. Believe me, I looked upon you but now with pity, when I marked the benumbing spell spread over you by yonder passionless beauty."

"Thou dost most grossly abuse," said Maudsley, "the privilege of thy weakness. I would I knew if thou wert man or child, angel or demon, that thou standest here calmly mocking me, while I stand listening like a slave."

"Be calm, Harry Maudsley," answered the mysterious youth, while Maudsley, who really seemed in a manner fascinated, and who, perhaps, as would not have seemed extraordinary in that

age of boundless superstition, believed himself in the presence of something unearthly, stood obediently silent again.

"Be calm, Harry Maudsley; I tell you I pitied you from my heart, when I saw you thus spell-bound by your cold enchantress. No, the woman I could worship should be one who should make the blood whirl through the veins, not a statue carved in ice, to freeze my heart and chill my senses."

"Why then," asked Maudsley, "why in the name of Heaven, if you are not bound by some singular tie to the fate of yonder maiden, or my own, why are you thus interested, why were you thus impassioned, why did you arrest my arm, and frustrate my intentions; in one word, whence and what are ye?"

"Faith," answered the lad, still in the same gentle but taunting manner, "I hardly know why I should answer your catechism. My own information as to your name and purposes, your past and your future career, are all sufficiently well known to me, and yet have I not intruded upon the privacy of your thoughts by one single question?"

"My future! my future! inexplicable and perplexing being!" exclaimed Maudsley, "presumest thou then to read the dark, unwritten page of coming events?"

"Truly," answered the stranger, "it needeth no ghost from the grave to foretell thy future. A less preternatural hand might venture to lift the curtain, which hardly conceals the mad career of such a reckless spirit as thou seemest."

"Read it to me, if thou canst and darest," exclaimed Maudsley, impatiently.

"No, no," exclaimed his companion, "I am no necromancer nor mountebank. Least of all, to-night, shouldst thou listen to thy doom. Suffice that if I read the stars aright, thy fortune is still within thy command, thy destiny not so direful as thou thinkest. Nay more, thou shalt have a pledge of this promise. Mark me, ere three days are flown, shalt thou find around thy neck, something which is very dear to thy heart."

"What mean you by this riddle?" exclaimed Maudsley — "and what know ye of ——— "

"Ask me no farther," interrupted the youth, "what I know, I know. Suffice it you to know, that where you most love, I most hate, where you most hate, I most madly love. Yet am I not your enemy, nay more, I would be your friend, but that friendship from me is a mockery and a curse."

"Truly, I thank you for your good wishes," interrupted Maudsley, "but I could wish you to talk less in parables, which convey but dim intelligence to my uninstructed ear. Know ye, since ye forbid me to ask you further of yourself, and since you disclaim all interest in, and all affection for the fair Puritan who dwelleth yonder, know ye yon false-hearted knight, whom men call Sir Christopher Gardiner?"

"Do I know the knight?" almost shrieked the stranger, in a shrill passionate tone. "Do I know him?" and the boy laughed a hollow, mocking laugh, that almost chilled the listener's blood. "Truly I know him well. And yet I pity him, I pity thee, I pity yon fair, icy maiden, I pity each and all of ye more, ten thousand times more, than I do myself. There might be creatures who, if they looked in upon my heart even now, might pity even while they shrank from me. No matter, we are all the fools of our destiny, and the time shall come, perhaps, when the strange and bewildering scroll shall be as plain to our senses as if written in letters of light. I cry your pardon," added the youth, suddenly checking himself, and speaking in an altered and more moderate tone, "I am much to blame, but sometimes I fear my brain is turning. This wandering late of nights may be hurtful. You ask me if I know one Sir Christopher Gardiner. I bade you to question me no further, yet you shall be answered. Beware, Harry Maudsley. Look to your beautiful Puritan. Though she be marble, she may be moved, though she be ice, she may melt; and I tell you that, if there be

one silver cord of human tenderness within her heart; the hand of the wily tempter hath already struck it, and awakened its slumbering music."

The youth paused, and looked at Maudsley with an expression of profound commiseration, as he saw how deep a wound he was inflicting. He laid his hand once more upon his arm with an almost caressing gentleness, as he said in a low and melancholy tone, —

"Alas! we are all consumed by selfishness. Believe me, I spoke wildly and perhaps unwisely. Tell me," continued the boy almost fondly, "is yonder fair-faced Puritan so dear to your heart then?"

"I know not from what source," answered Maudsley, "that you derive your mysterious power over my mind. Tell me, I conjure you, why do I thus stand listening like a slave to your wild and incoherent ravings?"

"You have not answered my question," continued the youth, still in the same caressing tone. "Tell me, is the maiden so dear to you then?"

"She was."

"And is she so no longer?"

"No."

"Alas, Harry Maudsley, I know you better than you know yourself. Yours is a nature where passion obeys not reason. You love her still. Those icy chains are riveted upon your heart. Look yonder at the cold, pale, virgin moon," said the youth, as the crests of the shadowy forests became silvery in the rising radiance. "Serene and passionless she sails in yonder calm and distant ether, and heeds not the tumultuous tides of ocean, which follow her high command like spell-bound slaves. Such is your fair and soulless mistress. I pity you, and ah! how truly can I sympathize with you. Think you I know not what brought you hither over the wintry sea? and think you I

do no honor to the thought? I too, I too, who have forsaken home, and happiness, and God, only to wander in the wilderness till my heart bleeds itself to death, I too can pity, sympathize with, yea, render honor to the abject slave of love — wandering in deserts, braving peril, sacrificing his all, and all for naught."

"My sacrifices are over, boy," said Maudsley; "I have torn my heart out, but I can leave it in the desert. I know not your sorrows, but I fain would know them. Let us return together across the stormy deep. Neither to you nor to myself, I fear, is the crown decreed after all our struggles. Will you go with me?"

The moon-light shone full upon the pale, beautiful face of the youth. Maudsley saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"No, Harry Maudsley, I go with none. I must do my work alone. For me there is no returning, no reprieve. Your heart is kind, and deserves a better fate than seemeth now in store for it. Believe me, it shall go better with thee, and trust the word of one who hath so long been out of fortune's favor, that he hath ceased to hope for himself, that your star shall soon emerge from the clouds. Farewell, Harry Maudsley, perhaps we meet again."

The boy seized his hand, pressed it passionately to his lips, and then suddenly disappeared. Maudsley called to him, but in vain. He followed in the direction in which he had vanished, but could find no trace of him. Obeying some irresistible impulse he dashed forward in pursuit. Plunging through the difficult and briery thicket, now caught by mighty grape-vines which twined like coiling serpents round his limbs, now hurled to the ground by the grey, protecting branches of the ancient trees, and now struggling through the dreary morass which quaked and shifted beneath his feet, still on he sped, through the silent night and the darkling forest. He reached the shore, he looked forth upon the mighty waste of waters.

The moon hung in cloudless glory above the tossing waves, an the long column of light lay upon the ocean's surface like prostrate pillar of silvery fire. But neither on shore or se could his eyes discern any trace of a living creature. He thre himself on the sandy beach, and listened to the monotonous bu musical roar of the surf. His wild and whirling thoughts wer soothed for a season by the majestic influences of that sublim solitude, and his boiling blood flowed more calmly.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAY-DAY REVELS AT MERRY-MOUNT.

The last day of April had arrived, and the eccentric sovereign of Merry-Mount, who had promised to his subjects and himself a celebration of the ensuing festival of May-day, according to the good old custom of merry England, had completed his preparations. Many of the guests had already assembled, for the sports were to commence upon the eve, and to be continued through the following day.

A rabble rout of vagabonds of all descriptions had assembled at Merry-Mount. All his numerous subjects and retainers, including those of the reader's acquaintance who had already recovered from the damages sustained in the conflict at Mishawum, were lounging about the pathways of the forest or amusing themselves upon the open glade around the palace, with various uproarious sports. Upon the summit of the bare and elevated mound which rose on the seaward side of Morton's territory, the sovereign himself was seated in company with Henry Maudsley and the blacksmith, Thomas Walford.

"I am truly beholden to you, my masters," said Morton, "that you have kindly consented to grace our poor revels. A poor and meagre substitute, I fear me, for the ample and jovial revelry of old England's merriest holiday, our entertainment may prove; still good humor shall not be wanting, nor such good cheer as the wilderness may afford."

"I hope my worthy gossip, Robin Bootefish, hath quite recovered from his ugly knocks from yonder red-legged vermin," said the blacksmith; "truly was he pounded into a jelly, and I never

thought at one time to see him on his pegs again. A good swashing fellow is Robin, and a hearty fellow at a hug with a red-breech; I hope his soul and body hold together, Master Morton."

"Hold together! that do they indeed," answered Morton; "honest Robin's soul and body are as well coopered together again as ever a one of his own ale-butts over which he presides with so much dignity. Master Maudsley, you are looking but so-so. I fear me from your cloudy countenance that you have but small spirit for these follies."

"In truth, Master Morton," answered Maudsley, who still lingered from habit at the place where he had temporarily and for his own purposes established himself, but to whom, as may be easily supposed, the habits of the Merry-Mount crew were distasteful enough in his present state of mind; "in truth, I fear I shall be but a sorry guest at your festivities, and you must pardon me for reminding you that, by our compact, I am to be but a looker-on, and not an actor."

"As you please, as you please," answered Morton, "you shall find that our majesty of Merry-Mount is less despotic than our royal brother of England. Nobody shall dance or sing upon compulsion in my dominions; but trust me, Master Maudsley, you would do well, for your own sake, to take that gloomy mask off your handsome face, and make a present of it to some Plymouth saint who may have cracked his lantern-jaws with too much yawning and singing of hallelujahs. By the way, I regret that our estimable, but rather serious friend, Sir Christopher, hath positively refused us his presence. He is at present at New Plymouth, I believe."

The gloom upon Maudsley's haggard features was certainly not enlivened by the concluding allusion of Morton to the absent knight, who had hitherto eluded his pursuit, and his voice trembled with suppressed emotion as he replied,—

"I have heard that the knight, with whom by the way my acquaintance is but limited, had made a pilgrimage to Plymouth. I have some trifling matters of business to settle with him, and trust ere long that he will return. I presume you know something of his movements, Master Morton."

"Truly, but little can safely be predicted of Sir Christopher's movements," was the reply, "unless one could have the good fortune to look at their very intricate springs, and those unluckily are locked up very closely in his own bosom. Still I shall marvel much if he do not return to his customary haunt before many days have passed."

"It appears that your sports," said Maudsley, who was desirous of changing the subject of their conversation, "are to commence this afternoon. I suppose your May-pole, however, will hardly be erected before morning, as that I think is the usage, at any rate, in the part of England which I inhabit."

"The May-games," answered Morton, who was full of quaint information upon this, and upon all kindred subjects, "were not always confined to the first of May, nor concluded in one day. They, are indeed, Master Maudsley, a relic of ancient custom among the heathen, who religiously celebrated the four last days of April and the first of May, as a festival in honor of the goddess Flora, the gentle deity of flowers and fruit. The ancients were a genial and an imaginative race. By the beard of Jupiter Diespiter, I sometimes think there was some mistake at my birth, and that I was intended to have flourished among the pagans."

"But I believe," said Maudsley, "that an equal homage has been always paid to the same divinity, although under a less classical appellation, from the remotest times, both in England and in other lands."

"Unquestionably," said Morton, "the custom hath been time-honored among Christians as well as pagans, and I swear that the

benighted heathens of this Ultima Thule shall also learn to respect it. The peasantry of England and of other countries hold that the observation of the ceremony is a good omen, and will propitiate the warm favors of the Summer, and win the golden treasures of Autumn."

"In old times," said Maudsley, "I think I have heard or read that, as in antiquity, the revels of May were protracted much beyond a single day in England."

"Of a surety," replied Morton. "In the reign of Henry VII., the genial month was so overladen with its festivities, that May perforce usurped the dominion of its sunny sister June. Those, Master Maudsley, were the glorious days of graceful and manly sport, and the returning smiles of spring were hailed and courted amid the waving of pennoned lances, the career of panoplied knights, the clangor of trumpets, the smiles of beauty. Day after day on horseback, on foot, with spear and sword, cross-bow and quarter-staff, would the gallant knights continue their tournament, maintaining the charms and the supremacy of their sovereign Lady May against all comers from far or near."

"But the custom was of far more ancient observance, I believe," said Maudsley, who was listlessly endeavoring to distract his stormy thoughts, by affecting an interest in the subject, which at that moment engrossed his companion's whole attention.

"More ancient!" exclaimed Morton; "marry, I would fain know at what remote period there was an England without a May-day. Not surely in the glorious days of King Arthur, when the beauteous Queen Guenever, as soon as the genial month appeared, would ride forth early in the morn, a Maying into the woods and fields, attended by her knights of the round table, all clad in green, all mounted on their mettled steeds, each bearing a fair lady on his crupper, and each followed by his esquire and yeoman. Alas, my masters, I do ill to dazzle ye by invoking

the stirring memories of brighter ages; but a wayfarer in the wilderness, like myself, must even do his best with the materials which he can find."

"There is a meaning and a moral in all such ceremonies," said Maudsley, "although the sad-browed saints, whose fingers itch to pluck all the gay plumage from life, can never see it."

"Marry," replied Morton, "and what a forlorn and shivering chicken will poor humanity prove when they have pulled all the painted feathers out of its tail. A fig for life when it hath lost its illusion. The foul fiend fly away with the world, for me, when it hath grown virtuous and sensible and regenerated. These wiseacres, who would crop the world of its frivolities as closely as they trim their own skulls, may have the whole of it to themselves and welcome, as soon as they have completed their work. When life is drained of its liquor, they may live in the empty butt as merrily as Diogenes in his tub, and no interference from Thomas Morton. In the mean time, Master Maudsley, there shall be mirth and dancing, good liquor and good fellowship. But lo! our friend, the Cyclops of Mishawum, lieth already in the arms of Morpheus. I fear I have been tedious as a Puritan. Moreover, the hours are advancing, let me first awaken this slumbering giant, and then with your permission, Master Maudsley, we will descend to the plain yonder."

The blacksmith was accordingly awakened from a refreshing nap, which the didactic conversation of Morton had induced, and the three accordingly descended from the mound.

It was already late in the afternoon. The weather was fine and warm, the season was a forward one, so that there was a prospect which might not have always proved the case, that the necessary garlands and budding branches would be found for the morrow's purposes, and upon the whole, the spring, in this climate more than in any other, the most perverse, coquettish, and fickle of seasons, seemed desirous of rewarding her ardent

and light-hearted adorer with her sunniest smiles. The open glade around the palace was thronged with a strange and motley assemblage. We have already observed, that besides the large number of vagabonds of various descriptions who occupied the log-houses which were clustered and formed a little village around the palace of the suzerain, there had been a general invitation given by Morton to all the scattered inhabitants of the neighborhood to share his hospitality upon this occasion. Moreover, a considerable number of Indians of both sexes, who had long been upon terms of intimacy with the Merry-Mount crew, and many of whom, in consideration of Morton's good humor and good liquor, were willing to acknowledge him as their liege lord, were mingled indiscriminately with groups of Englishmen, as wild in conduct, if paler in countenance, than themselves. Boisterous games, frantic peals of laughter, loud and incoherent and often incomprehensible language, English chatter and English oaths intermixed with the guttural grunting of the Indians, in short, a distracting variety of screams, shouts and yells awoke the echoes of the hilly amphitheatre which encircled the scene.

"Come, my merry men all," said Morton, as soon as he arrived among them, "the sun is already near setting, — 'tis time we decided the contest between the forces of Winter and Summer; for beshrew me, if we win not the victory, the May-pole may stand another year in the forest among its brethren, with the crows building their nests in its branches, instead of being borne and erected in triumph upon the summit of Merry-Mount."

"Please your worship," said Bootefish, who now came forward with a very imposing and solemn air, "the preparations for the banquet of this evening are completed, the ducks are spitted, the pigeons trussed, the lobsters disemboweled, the ale broached, the spirits ready, and our spirits willing — I only wait your worship's orders."

"Spoken like a Spartan, most laconic of butlers," answered

Morton, and now do me the favor to draw off your party, or rather order the two prefects to lead each his own to the summit of the mount."

Bootefish, who was Morton's prime minister and grand coadjutor upon all great occasions, and who felt himself entirely in his element when engaged in ceremonies of any sort, now seized a brazen trumpet which hung at his waist, and blew a blast which made the forest ring again. As he concluded his strain, two grotesquely attired creatures were seen suddenly to issue from different thickets of the neighboring wood, and advance towards the company. The first seemed a cross between an ourang outang and a bear, walking erect like the one and covered with a shaggy hide like the other. It was a tall, grim figure, with the face of a man looking hideously forth from a tangled thicket of beard which hung around his face and swept his breast. His whole body as well as his arms, legs, hands and feet were covered with black and rugged fur; a garland of winter green was upon his head, and another encircled his waist. This Orson held an oaken cudgel in his hand and advanced boldly towards the assemblage, making a series of uncouth gestures. This was the embodiment of Winter.

The other figure came dancing and skipping forward with the airy movements of a Zephyr, although his merry features would hardly have seemed sufficiently divine to captivate Aurora. A garland of wind-flowers and violets adorned his brows, a robe of green gossamer floated lightly from his shoulders, his legs and feet were adorned with buskins and sandals, and he had wings upon his heels. Thus attired, and presenting a happy combination of Ariel, Mercury, and Zephyr, this airy being, who was the representative of Summer, the *præfectus cohortis æstalis*, according to the pedantic Morton's expression, skipped forward with many fantastic contortions towards the assembled spectators. The two suddenly met in the centre of the glade, and gazed at

each other with apparent astonishment and indignation. Suddenly, Orson, with a howl of rage, lifted his mighty club, Zephyr raised his light and flower-wreathed wand to defend himself; but just as the blow was descending, skipped nimbly back, while his ferocious antagonist, losing his balance by the unresisted violence of his own attack, floundered clumsily upon the ground. Zephyr now frisked briskly forward, and began to dance upon his prostrate body, but Orson suddenly rousing himself with a roar, the aerial being tumbled in his turn, while Orson again threatened to demolish him with his club. Summer lay stark and stiff upon the ground awaiting the decisive stroke; the blow descended, but ere it struck the victim, the prostrate Zephyr suddenly darted into the air, thrusting out a long, red tongue, and while his blundering foe was furiously beating the ground, he sprang lightly upon his shoulders, and tied himself in a knot about his neck. Orson, thus incommoded, howled hideously and capered round the field, striving in vain to free himself. It was useless, the imp securely held his seat, grinning like a mythological monkey. Suddenly, Orson collecting all his energies, plunged wildly forward, directly towards a large tree which stood near the centre of the glade, apparently determined to dash out the brains, both of himself and his persecutor. As he reached the tree, however, the Zephyr skipped nimbly from his post, caught a projecting branch, and swung himself upon it. The luckless Orson gained nothing by his stratagem, but a useless thump of his own hairy carcase against the tree, the force of which brought him again upon the ground. Zephyr jumped again from his perch, his eyes glittering with triumph; but ere he had achieved the victory by standing again upon his prostrate body, his enemy was up again, and again menacing him with his club.

The trumpet of Bootefish now suddenly blew a second blast, and at the sound the two champions desisted from their combat, and with threatening gestures separated from each other.

The whole assemblage, who had been gazing with much glee at the combat between the representatives of Summer and Winter, seemed to regret that it had been decided neither way, but while they were shouting for its renewal they were directed to divide themselves into two parties. At the word of command, and with the promptness of drilled soldiers, they obeyed the orders, and divided themselves into two equal portions; over the one of which Orson instantly assumed command, while the other arrayed itself under the banners of Zephyr. The two parties, marching in harmony with the trumpet of Bootefish, which all the while was blowing martial sounds, now advanced towards the mound, which they ascended at the opposite ends. Morton, as umpire of the impending combat, had preceded them to the summit, and had seated himself upon a rock, where, attended by Walford and Maudsley, he presided in solemn state over the scene.

The two parties, numbering some twenty-five upon a side, stood in single file along the hill-top. Their leaders now arranged them across the breadth of the mound, so that only about the half of each party stood upon the table-land, while the other portions maintained a difficult footing upon the steep sides of the cliff, by clinging to each other. Bootefish now blew another blast from his trumpet, and then waving his hand for silence, in a very impressive manner spoke as follows: —

"Oyez, Oyez, know ye, good people all assembled, that our gracious sovereign lord, Thomas Morton, Prince of Passanogessit, and suzerain of Merry-Mount, not being satisfied with the combat betwixt the forces of the winter and spring, hath been graciously pleased to ordain, that ye all, here and now assembled, and equally and fairly matched, do each and all of ye, here and now offer your own bodies upon the issue, and by true and manful wager of battle, decide the question."

Then gravely bowing to his sovereign, the dignified Bootefish blew another blast, and then added in a less pompous manner, "Now fall to work, ye devils ye, red, white, and grey, — pull Dick, pull devil, hug heathen, hug Christian, and make the matter short, or by the Lord, the brant geese will be burned to a cinder."

The stately butler, who already began to be impatient, lest the banquet, which had occupied so much of his attention lately, should be spoiled by delay, now withdrew towards the vicinity of his liege lord, and looked upon the contest with some impatience.

The two leaders, Orson and Zephyr, now joined hands together upon the summit, with their followers dangling in a chain, each clasping the waist of the one before him in the line. Manfully and ferociously they tugged, each striving to pull their antagonists over to their own side or to the ground. For a long time they stood locked, motionless, and so evenly balanced, that neither column wavered an inch, till at last Orson, with a howl, which was responded to by the shrill whoop of half a score of savages, hugged the grimacing Zephyr within his hairy arms, and pulled the whole opposing column half a dozen feet towards him by main strength. Zephyr, half suffocated in his embrace, lay apparently powerless in his arms, and hardly made an effort to resist the attack, but no sooner did he find himself partially at liberty and on his feet again, than he dexterously turned a somerset, still holding Orson by his shaggy fore-paws, and twisting his elastic legs tightly about the monster's throat, ordered the nearest link in the living chain which hung behind himself, to pull with might and main. He obeyed, while the strangling Orson, helpless and powerless, was dragged forward like a bull to the shambles, with his cohort struggling confusedly after him. Suddenly there was a pause, the party who were so nearly victorious began to yield again. Zephyr still hung, but with

relaxed hold, upon Orson's neck, and the shaggy representative of winter, breathing and gaining strength again, began to press backwards, dragging his opponents after him with prodigious vigor. Zephyr, still loosely clinging to his foe, allowed himself to be dragged to the edge of the cliff, the opposite column shouting all the while their yells of triumph, when suddenly he untwisted his legs, threw a back somerset, wrenched himself free from Orson's clutches as he did so, and then stood on his feet at the head of his column, while his antagonist, who, with his whole party, had been tugging with might and main to drag their enemies to the brow of the precipice, now suddenly released from the opposing pressure, toppled backwards upon his men, who all fell one upon another, heels over head, down the steep side of the mount, rolling helter-skelter on each other, till they reached the marsh below, some of them even sousing themselves in the creek at the base of the hill, before the impetus of their descent was exhausted.

The trumpet of Bootefish now blew another blast, and the lord of Merry-Mount stepping forward, announced that the combat was terminated in favor of the cohorts of Summer, and that accordingly, upon the following morning, the Summer should be brought home with appropriate ceremonies and symbols of victory. He farther announced, that as the evening was approaching, and the immediate business of the day terminated, he invited the worshipful company to do him the honor of their presence at the grand banquetting-hall of the palace.

The ceremonious Bootefish now again sounded his trumpet, while the discomfited Orson, with his prostrate followers, arose and struggled from the morass which had received them, shaking the mud and water from their garments, and once more ascended to the summit of the mount. Here, at the command of their sovereign lord, both champions embraced each other in token of amity, Orson hugging the breath out of Zephyr's body, and

Zephyr returning the compliment by again half strangling his late antagonist with his supple legs.

The whole party now formed again with great decorum, and heralded by the chief butler and master of ceremonies, who waddled down the steep declivity as majestically as his short legs would allow, they followed the Prince of Passanogessit and his two companions, Maudsley and the blacksmith, towards the palace. An abundant supply of good cheer and good liquor had been provided, and the banquetting-room, which was capacious enough to hold about one half the guests, was soon thronged, while the remainder of the company, who could find no room, were satisfied with bivouacking upon the outside, where they were liberally supplied from the tables within the house.

Master Morton presided with solemn dignity, upon an elevated dais or platform at one end of the rude hall, where Maudsley also found a seat, and looked distractedly at the wild and grotesque scene which presented itself to his eyes. The shades of evening had already settled upon the forest, but the rude hall was as usual lighted by the broad glare of numerous pine torches which threw a fitful light upon the strangely assorted company, where the ruddy features, civilized attire, and uproarious mirth of the Saxon mingled wildly with the flashing eyes, painted faces and rude but picturesque costume of the savage children of the forest, who sat as motionless at the revel as if sculptured in bronze.

The company upon the outside had lighted a fire, around which they were clustered, while the food and liquor, laughter and song went round, and before many hours had elapsed, they were joined by the other party, who had found themselves somewhat cramped by the confined dimensions of the royal banquetting hall. Here the mirth and uproar were continued till late in the night, or rather till early in the morning, although Morton, who had ordered all matters with a foresight befitting so solemn

an occasion, had taken care that but a limited quantity of liquor should be served out at this introductory portion of the revels. The sovereign of Merry-Mount, as soon as he thought that the banquetting had gone far enough, had himself retreated within his domicile to snatch a short repose. At about two o'clock in the morning, he aroused himself, and proceeding with great gravity into the midst of the assembled rioters who were still congregated about the bonfire, he mounted upon the stump of a large tree which had been felled, and addressed them as follows: —

"My faithful lieges and dutiful subjects, we are of opinion that this night's revel hath already been sufficiently protracted. Therefore, be it known to ye, that it is our pleasure that ye do now, one and all, and in such parties as your tastes may arrange, go presently forth into yonder forest, there to collect the choicest garlands, and to hew to the earth the mighty pine already selected for our May-pole, which now still standeth among its leafy brethren. Ye will at sunrise bring home in triumph the majestic symbol of the returning spring, and with appropriate ceremonies erect it upon yonder mount, where it shall serve as a fair sea-mark to guide all comers upon the morrow, who desire to partake of the hospitality of our palace of Merry-Mount.

"Furthermore be it known unto ye, that the May dew upon the grass is a sovereign specific for restoring and renovating the lustre of the human countenance. Ye will do well to bathe your visages, something time-stained and haply flushed with liquor as they may be, that beauty may be spread over them, as behoveth the gallant followers and sworn lieges of our sovereign, Lady May. Go forth, my lieges, and your sovereign shall, after a little time, follow in your footsteps."

As the suzerain concluded his oration, which was received with uproarous demonstrations of applause, the company, with many a whoop and yell, divided themselves into different parties,

and plunged forth in various directions into the forest which surrounded the palace. Morton withdrew again into his mansion, while the blacksmith, who had no mind to sacrifice his sleep in order to participate in these midnight ceremonies, and who cared not to enhance the beauty of his swarthy visage by bathing it in May dew, stretched himself at his vast length by the embers of the fire, and was soon lost in oblivion. Maudsley, after wandering restlessly to and fro upon the borders of the forest, till he was wearied with the conflict of his own distracting thoughts, retired into his own log-hut, which stood in the neighborhood of the palace.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONTINUATION OF THE MAY-DAY REVELS.

The sun rose brightly from the sea upon May-day morning, and Maudsley, who had found but slight and unsatisfactory repose within his hut, stood upon the summit of the mount, and refreshed his weary soul with a contemplation of the majestic scenery around him. Although he was by nature of a wayward and impetuous disposition, and although his prejudices, from the earliest period of his life, had enlisted him strongly against the gloomy and austere principles of Puritanism, he could not but confess, as he looked upon that solemn and impressive wilderness scene, so full of fresh and uncontaminated beauty, that it were indeed a prostitution of nature, if the virgin purity, the cool and shady loveliness of this sylvan world were to be profaned forever by orgies such as he had already witnessed. He could not but confess, and perhaps there was something within his bosom responsive to the enthusiastic spirit of Esther Ludlow, which suggested the thought, that it were a nobler destination for this stern and unappropriated wilderness, to become a new realm for earnest and self-sustained enthusiasts who had become weary of the older world, than to fall under the base dominion of the scum of Europe, conducted thither by leaders impelled by purposes of self-aggrandizement, and seeking only to transplant upon this wild territory the worn-out follies, the decrepid purposes, the reeking crimes of civilization. He thought, as he stood alone upon that cliff, of the contrast between the grovelling pursuits and the ribald character of the men who dwelt around,

and the lofty if fanatical nature of those, concerning whose welfare and success he could not, in spite of himself, but participate somewhat in the interest which was so enthusiastically felt by Esther. He imagined that even he, too, felt that within him which could abjure the world, where he had dwelt till he had found or fancied himself weary of its follies, and he abandoned himself for a moment to a vague dream of what happiness there might be in this beautiful land, alone with one who was dearer to him than the whole world beside, when suddenly the dark shadow of the knight rose upon his fancy, and dispelled in an instant the soothing vision. At a moment when he was struggling to shake off the thoughts which were again thronging to his brain, he was awakened at once to a vivid perception of the world about him, by a variety of shrill and uproarious sounds which issued from the forest. At first, so entirely had he forgotten the mummery of the preceding evening, and the promised sports of the present day, he was at a loss to account for the sounds, but as soon as he observed one or two of his late companions emerging from the woods, he recollected that the May morning had arrived, and he descended from the eminence towards the open glade.

In a few moments the whole wild crew, who had passed the night in the forest, had entered upon the open field, and after a short pause formed a procession and moved slowly towards the mount. They were bringing home the May-pole, which was a vast pine nearly a hundred feet in length. The tree had been stripped of its bark and branches, ornamented with garlands of wintergreen and forest-tree blossoms, and placed upon rudely constructed wheels. In place of oxen, some fifty savages were yoked together, each wearing May garlands upon their swarthy brows, and evidently taking a grave satisfaction in thus assisting at a solemn ceremony, which Bootefish had assured them was an initiatory step towards their conversion from paganism, and

which was sure to require copious besprinklings of the strong water, which they worshipped as the white man's God.

Thus harnessed, the savages drew the mighty May-pole slowly along, with the Lord of Merry-Mount seated upon it in solemn state. The rest of the company thronged around him in his triumphal progress, marching in unison to the braying of trumpets and the thump of drums, whose rude music sounded strangely among those ancient woods. After a time, and with great efforts, the May-pole was at last brought to the top of the Merry-Mount, where, after a pair of elk antlers had been fastened to its top, and the red cross banner of England, with a variety of other pennons, added to its other decorations, it was triumphantly erected upon the summit. Many shouts of congratulation now rent the air, and then the company, a little wearied with their exertions, threw themselves upon the ground for a few moments' repose. Morton and several of his adherents now withdrew for a time from the mount, leaving the company under the charge of his lieutenant and grand master of the ceremonies; who, after serving out to them what he considered a sufficient quantity of liquor, soon after retired himself. A grand arbor was now constructed of green branches upon the hill, not far from the May-pole, and another of lesser dimensions near it. A considerable time had thus been spent, and the sun was already approaching the zenith, when suddenly the music again was heard advancing from the neighborhood of the palace, and presently a fantastically attired company were seen advancing gravely toward the mount. The procession was led by the sovereign of Merry-Mount himself, who, as Lord of the May, was attired according to immemorial custom in the green forest garb of Robin Hood. He wore moreover upon his head a gilt and glittering crown, and held a gilded staff in his hand, as symbols of his supremacy. Hanging upon his arm, came a dark-eyed, dusky daughter of the forest, who, for lack of a fairer representa-

tive, was arrayed as Maid Marian, the May Lord's favorite dame. She too, as Queen of the May, wore a gilded crown upon her swarthy brows, with her glossy black tresses floating almost to her feet, and was arrayed in gaily colored robes of purple and crimson cloth. They were followed by Cakebread, who had recovered from the effects of the flagellation received at Mishawum, and who now figured as court jester. The respectable buffoon wore a fool's-cap and bells, a motley coat, with tight-fitting Venetian pantaloons, whereof one leg was of flame color and the other of purple. He held a bauble or fool's baton in his hand, and his dress was hung with little bells, which jingled merrily as he danced along, occasionally refreshing himself and the spectators with one of his favorite somersets. Next came the grave and dignified Bootefish as Friar Tuck, his short but portly person arrayed in a monkish robe bound about his ample waist with a cord from which hung a rosary and cross, and his rubicund physiognomy looking particularly effulgent, as it broke out like the rising sun from the dark and cloud-like cowl which covered his venerable head. Rednape followed as the lover of Maid Marian, wearing a tawdry cap, ornamented with a wreath of violets, fastened securely to the right side of his head, and a sky-blue jacket; while his long legs were daintily incased in scarlet breeches and hose, cross gartered, and with countless ribbons and true lover's knots streaming from every portion of his dress. Next came the Spanish gentleman and the Morisco, personated by less distinguished members of the company, and wearing immoderately loose breeches, curling shoes of a yard's dimension, and enormous, empty sleeves hanging from their gaily colored jerkins. The principal musical performer followed, with a drum hanging from his neck, a tamborine in his hand, and a lathe sword at his side. Next came a creature with a wolf's head and a fox's tail, with half a dozen green and golden snakes wreathed round his waist; after him, a kind of goblin

earing the grim head and portentous teeth of a shark, with a agon's tail; then several palmers masqued and cloaked; then a ak-in-the-green, or living pyramid of blossoming branches, ncing grotesquely along to the wild music which accompanied e procession. Last of all came the merry Bernaby Doryfall, ling the hobby-horse, the animal's head and shoulders artistilly contrived of pasteboard, while an ample housing, or rather tticoat of parti-colored cloth, descended to the ground, and ectually concealed the rider's legs. The amiable Centaur re a pumpkin helmet of formidable appearance, and flourished wooden dagger in his right hand, while with the other he reined his restive steed as he gaily pranced and capered about, inging up the rear of the pageant in a very effective style.

The procession ascended the mount in an orderly manner, d arranged themselves about the May-pole, while the rest of e revellers arose from their recumbent positions and stood, aiting the orders of their sovereign. That potentate now took roll of paper from his bosom, upon which he had inscribed a ort poem, setting forth, in very high flown and classical dogerel, an allegorical description of the ceremony, combined with any enigmatical allusions to the present and prospective condion of the nascent empire of the Massachusetts.* This, after he d read it in a sonorous and impressive voice, he gravely fixed to the May-pole, that it might serve for the edification of is guests, whenever they felt inclined for literary relaxation. hen, with an indescribable air of majesty, he again extended is hand to the dusky Queen of the Revels, and conducted her ith stately step to the great arbor, where he seated her upon a stic throne. Then advancing once more in front of the verant tent, he exclaimed,—

"With gilded staff and crossed scarf, the May Lord, here I stand."

* See Note V.

"Know ye, therefore, my faithful subjects, that your sports are to be conducted in an orderly and reputable guise, so as in no wise to cast discredit upon the court of your sovereign, or to invoke a blush upon the tender cheek of our loving queen, —

'Music, awake! ye lieges all advance,
And circling join in merry Morrice dance.'"

Thus having spoken, the merry monarch seated himself at the side of his queen, while the whole of the company, Christians and heathens, friars and dragons, palmers, masquers and mummers all joined hand in hand, and danced madly about the May-pole. Round and round they frisked, their brains, already heated with draughts stronger than May-dew, whirling faster than their heels, and their many voices, frantic with unbridled excitement, ringing forth upon the solemn wilderness around them so wildly and discordantly, that the very beasts which peopled the forests might have shrunk to their caves in dismay. Round and round they whirled, shouting, laughing, yelling; now some of them rolling by dozens upon the earth, and dragged about by their companions till they found their feet again; now the more active of them leaping and curvetting over each other's heads, or frisking about upon each other's shoulders, the riders hallooing in triumph and the victims staggering blindly about, but all yelling and leaping as if the wild and stunning music which still played more and more furiously had maddened their senses or transformed them into goblins. Faster and faster flew their heels, louder and louder sounded the diabolical strains of the music, more fierce and frantic rose the piercing shouts; startling the echoes of the stern and savage hills around them, which seemed to reverberate an indignant response to their demoniacal merriment.

Suddenly Cakebread, the jester, broke from the circle and frisked forth into the centre of the group, shaking his bauble,

and commanding silence. The whirling vortex paused for a moment in its mad career, and the revellers, knowing scarcely if they stood upon heads or heels, became stationary for a moment, to listen to his communication.

"Look ye, my masters," he cried, "this is indeed the music of the spheres, though something cracked and discordant it may be, and this the circling of the starry hosts around the sun. Beshrew me, though, but these whirls be faster than befitteth some of the planets. As for me, I am a comet, bound to no orbit, and dance but for my own pleasure. If ye will that I execute a hornpipe, such as my virtuous dam, whom the Lord assoilzie, was wont to delight the world withal, so — if not, may the devil blow his trumpet, and set ye all whirling again — but the comet shall break loose from your influences."

Peter, it should be observed, was fond of stating confidentially to his friends that his parents had both been rope-dancers and fire-eaters by profession, and that he had been brought up from earliest childhood to their respectable calling. Furthermore, he was apt to mention that his destiny in life had been perverted by a pious and charitable schoolmaster, who had attempted to save him, like a brand from the burning, and had instructed him in Latin and the humanities, but had thrown him away again afterwards. By this process he had acquired an enlightened education, but had lost his ancestral calling, and had become neither flesh nor fish, and only fitted for a buffoon. This may serve to explain his vein of conversation, occasionally more ambitious than that of his confederates.

The company signified their approbation of his intentions, and accordingly Peter Cakebread came forward, his eyes glittering with merriment, and executed his promised hornpipe with wonderful zeal and agility, and in a manner to do credit to his parentage and education. Never before, at least in that wilderness, were seen such prodigious caperings, such impossible

pigeon wings, such a breathless profusion of miraculous somersets, such a hopeless confusion and entanglement of head, heels, arms, and legs, in one rapid and bewildering contortion. Merrily jingled the jester's bells upon foolscap, jerkin, and bauble, as he span and gambolled about, and merrily did the company applaud, as they gazed with open mouths and staring eyes upon this exhibition of his dexterity, and swore that he must have made a compact with the evil one, and exchanged his soul for a skeleton of whalebone, so superhuman did his pranks appear. In short, Peter Cakebread outdid himself, and seemed to have combined and embodied within himself, at least for that occasion, all the extraordinrry and necromantic qualities of his departed and illustrious parents. As he finished his dance, by standing stock-still upon the point of one toe, in the most graceful and preternatural manner, he was greeted with noisy plaudits, in which the sovereign of the revels heartily joined, as he sat there upon his rustic throne.

"Excellent well, Master Cakebread," he cried; "of a truth thou hast surpassed thyself. A merrier buffoon, a nimbler morrice-dancer, 'choreis aptior et jocis,' it could hardly have been my lot to meet with in this savage wilderness. Thy sovereign drinks to thy health, and the gentle Marian likewise," he concluded, after touching with his lips the tankard presented officiously by Bootefish, and then extending it to the dusky sharer of his throne, who, nothing loth, did due honor to the toast, or at least to the tankard, which she seemed better to understand.

After Cakebread had finished his dance, and had meekly and modestly returned thanks for the applause so generously bestowed upon his exertions, the master of ceremonies came forward with an important air, and conferred gravely with his sovereign.

"Thou art right, worthy Robin," answered that potentate, upon receiving this communication; "truly the chariot of Phœbus

is already wheeling from its zenith, and the day will yet prove too short for our sports if we use not better diligence. Let the pyramid of tankards and trinkets be erected, that the rosy milk-maids, according to immemorial custom, may dance for their simple prizes about it."

Bootefish accordingly beckoned two or three of the revellers to his assistance, while the rest remained recumbent upon the grass, pledging each other in the fiery liquor, and laughing uproariously at the jibes of Cakebread, who, stimulated by the applause which he had received, and the copious draughts which he had imbibed, exerted his utmost powers worthily to discharge the high functions of court jester, which had been conferred upon him by his sovereign.

Presently Bootefish and his assistants had erected upon the mount, about half way between the May-pole and Robin Hood's arbor, a tall pyramid of tankards, pewter plates, and flagons, which were to be used at the ensuing banquet, and garnished it with ribbons, small looking-glasses, strings of gaudy beads, gaily-colored strips of cloth, and a profusion of such cheap and trifling finery, as was most pleasing to savage eyes. He then apprized the lord of the revels that the pyramid was ready.

"Be it it known to ye, my lieges," said Morton, rising to address his subjects, that the milk-maid's dance is one of the most ancient and time-honored customs of the May-day, and that no festivity in honor of our sovereign lady could be esteemed complete, where this most graceful and becoming ceremony was wanting. Rings, chains, gooches, ribbons, and such simple bravery, are the appropriate rewards for the gentle contenders. It were a burning shame, if this custom, thus honored throughout the Christian land of our birth, should be omitted in this our first festivity in this benighted wilderness. The dance of the rosy milk-maids, pleasing and pretty as it is, can in no wise be dispensed with. Rosy milk-maids, come forth!"

At this concluding exclamation of Morton, his faithful master of the ceremonies gravely led forth a band of savage maidens, who had easily been prevailed upon, by promises of liberal reward, and for the sake of the glittering gewgaws which were conspicuously displayed upon the pyramid, to agree to take share in the pageant.

The rosy milk-maids, accordingly, as the Lord of Merry-mount facetiously designated these dusky daughters of the forest, came forward, hand in hand. Though differing widely from the buxom lasses of England, their prototypes upon this occasion, yet there was something far from disagreeable in these lithe and graceful creatures, with their bright, savage eyes, supple limbs, and elastic movements. They joined hand in hand, and executed gracefully one of their own wild dances, ever and anon, accompanying their airy bounds with sudden, shrill, but not unmusical snatches of rude vocal music. Their countrymen, mingled with their paler-faced confederates, looked on with dignified composure, occasionally applauding their vigorous whirls with a deep grunt of approval. When the dance was finished, they stood stock-still, and received at the hands of the master of ceremonies, the prizes which were suspended from the pyramid, with a composure and dignity which might have befitted princesses. There was no struggling, no snatching, no exultation of manner, but they quietly adorned their swarthy, but exquisitely moulded persons, with the various petty decorations which they received, and then gracefully and silently withdrew towards the principal group of revellers.

The company were now refreshed with a slight repast of dried venison and bear's meat, of which they partook as they reclined together upon the grass, and when the meal was concluded the sports were resumed. There were now many games of skill and strength exhibited. A mark was set up at the extremity of the mound, and the savages and Christians contested with each

other with the bow and arrow, in which, as was observed with considerable satisfaction by the sovereign, the palm of superiority was by no means always to be awarded to the Indians, but was fully as often due to his more immediate subjects, who manfully contended for victory with their swarthy allies. The savage was foiled at his own weapons. Perhaps it was the fire-water which dimmed his eye and rendered his nerves unsteady, while it left comparatively unaffected the more practised organizations of the English. Games of wrestling, Indian hug and trip and twitch succeeded, in which the savages, with their slippery skins, almost naked persons, and pliable limbs, were almost constantly victorious. Then there were merry bouts with the quarter staff, in which the hardy Saxon regained his lost supremacy, while many a broken head and bloody coxcomb dealt liberally among the heathen champions, attested the prowess of the English at their own national game. Late and long were the games protracted, and long and loud continued the uproar and the merriment. The sun was now fast approaching the horizon, and the hardy frames both of pagan and Christian would have been well nigh exhausted, but for the liberal circulation of the butler's flagon, which still flew gaily around, wherever a feeling of lassitude seemed creeping over the revellers. As the subtle influence mounted to their brains, again their spirits kindled, again their frames became instinct with renovated vigor, as if the wand of an enchanter had been waved above their heads.

To the games of wrestling and quarter staff, which had been conducted with orderly precision, now succeeded a general pell-mell, in which all parties, old and young, male and female, Saxon and savage, mingled in desperate and bewildering confusion, hugging, tumbling, knocking, thumping, tripping, twitching, pulling, leaping, dancing, singing, whooping and hallooing, as if they had all gone mad.

At last the Lord of Merry-Mount extended his hand to his sav-

age queen, and led her forth with majestic grace towards the May-pole. Both, wearing their golden crowns upon their heads and decked in royal robes, now danced a slow and stately measure, and then, with agreeable condescension, joining hand in hand with the whole group of revellers, they commenced once more the merry Morrice dance, the sovereign accompanying his steps by singing in a clear, melodious voice the initiatory verses of the song to which he had alluded. The whole assembly pealed out the chorus, making a din loud enough as they did so, to shame the howling of the forest wolves. When the song was concluded, the monarch and his queen slipped out from the throng, while the rest continued leaping and frisking about the May-pole, in a rapidly revolving circle, which increased every instant in its dizzy speed, till one after another, overpowered by his exertions, was sucked into the merry whirlpool and sank overcome upon the ground. The revellers, thus fairly danced off their legs, remained reposing upon the sward for a few minutes, till the master of ceremonies again sounded his trumpet, when all, suddenly inspired with renewed vigor, sprang to their feet again, and marshaled by the indefatigable Bootefish, formed again into solemn procession and marched down the mount towards the palace.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE MYSTERY.

The sun had sunk behind the forest-crowned hills. The golden and violet hues which fringed the robe of the departing day, were already mingling with the dusky purple of the twilight. The last lingering glow upon the summits of the pines had faded. The revellers had left the scene, whose shady loveliness their gambols had profaned. Maudsley alone remained upon the hill, feeling a sensation of relief, that his ear was for the moment no longer vexed with the howlings, nor his eye offended by the grimaces of the crew who had been keeping their long holiday upon the now silent mount.

"And did the gentle and sylvan sports of merry England," said he, musingly to himself, "indeed resemble this grotesque buffoonery, I could even find it in my heart to sympathize with the Puritans' hatred of all holidays and pastimes. Did the graceful and poetical festivities, by which the genial summer, in olden times and lands, was ushered to her throne, bear affinity to the frantic orgies which have this day been enacted, I could honor the stern enthusiasts, who would trample upon such mummeries. Methinks I feel my brow burning with confusion at having looked so long and so listlessly upon fantastic pranks, fouler even than the bacchanalian rites of ancient fable, and which might have shamed a crew of leaping satyrs."

As Maudsley thus moralized, he was startled by hearing a sound of altercation in the valley below him. He turned his eyes in the direction whence the sounds proceeded, and saw several figures, evidently belonging to the company, who had

recently entered the palace, and who seemed, so far as he could discern in the gathering twilight, to be collected in a group about a person wrapped in a mantle, who appeared desirous of disengaging himself from the rest.

He descended noiselessly from the hill, and advanced unperceived towards the disputants.

"Stole away, stole away," cried a mocking voice, which Maudsley recognised as that of Cakebread; "no, no, my pretty master, 'tis not for thee to treat with such disdain the hospitality of the puissant Lord of Merry-Mount. I tell thee I am sent to bid thee return to the banquet. I am ordered to conduct thee thither, by our sovereign potentate himself."

"And tell thy sovereign potentate," said a voice, in whose irritated, but musical tones Maudsley recognised something familiar, "that enforced hospitality is an insult which I will not brook. I am master of my own movements, and look ye, I purpose to go forth from Merry-Mount upon the instant. So commend me to your sovereign, as you style him, and tell him as much in answer to his message.

"But I tell thee, Master Malapert," answered Cakebread, who still acted as spokesman of the detaining party, "that I have special orders from the sovereign to bring thee back, and at once. So obey the monarch's behest, and that cheerfully and instantaneously, or else I shall arrest thee by virtue of this rod of office," and thus saying, the jester shook his bauble till the bells rang again in the face of him who seemed thus determined to withdraw.

"And I tell thee, Master Mountebank, that I give thee special orders to leave me, and that instantaneously," answered the stranger, in a still more angry tone; "go back to thy master, and bid him choose, in future, a less insolent buffoon to bear his messages."

"And how if the buffoon," answered the other in the same

mocking tones, "decline to profane the ear of majesty with insults, such as his mind is unlikely to digest?"

"Then keep them for thyself," was the reply; "I trow thy mind can digest them as easily as thy back can brook the lash."

The jester, somewhat stung by this allusion, was about making a still more irritating reply, when the long and ungainly figure of Rednape thrust itself between the disputants.

"Truly," said he, "I am inclined to look at the face of this high flying youngster, which he has kept covered all day so daintily. Who knows, Master Cakebread, but this be some villainous spy, sent among us by the saints. Come, come, my young master, off with your hood and mantle, honesty should never be ashamed to show its face in any company."

At this remark, the youth only pulled the hood of his cloak more closely about his features, and Maudsley, who had now cautiously advanced still nearer, saw that he was one of those, who, masked and disguised as palmers, had been present during the day's festivities, but who, as he had accidentally remarked, had kept as far as possible aloof from the crowd of revellers.

Rednape, somewhat puzzled by the determined resistance of the youth, stood for a moment awkward and irresolute, and apparently unwilling to proceed to extremities, when Cakebread, who seemed to have reasons of his own for detaining the departing guest, whispered something in his comrade's ear.

"Sayest thou so? sayest thou so?" said the ungainly vagabond, apparently astonished at the information which he had received, "then, mayhap, it were safer not to meddle with him, for if ever man had the devil for his most particular and confidential ——."

"Nonsense, man, I tell thee it will be worth a handful of golden angels to thee; still an' thou lackest courage; why I shall even take the liberty myself to unmask this pretty gentleman."

And thus saying, Cakebread, relying upon the support of his confederate, Rednape, ventured to pluck the slight and seemingly friendless stranger by the cloak. "I bid thee once more come along with me into the presence," he cried, "and that, too, wearing thine own natural features. What, man, the masking and mumming be all over, and ——."

The stripling, enraged at this assault upon his person, started suddenly back from the jester's clutches, and throwing back the short mantle from his right shoulder, suddenly brandished a dagger in his assailant's face.

"Now, by heaven, my patience is exhausted indeed," he cried in a voice of passion; "lay your ruffianly fingers upon me again, — interpose yourself an instant longer to my departure, and I will stab you to the heart."

The cowardly Cakebread, appalled at this intrepid demeanor of the stranger, shrunk hastily behind the awkward form of Rednape, crying out as he did so,

"To him, Humphrey, to him! Down with the murderous, blood-thirsty ruffian, down with the sanguinary spy, down with the disguised assassin, down with him, Humphrey."

Thus appealed to by his confederate, and obeying the brutal instincts of his nature, Rednape plucked his sword from its sheath, and rushed desperately upon the stranger, who, at the moment when he saw himself temporarily disengaged from his first tormentor, had suddenly attempted to save himself from the unequal contest by flight. The two other vagabonds, however, who had, apparently from curiosity, followed Cakebread and his companion from the palace, now interposed themselves to his retreat, and the unfortunate but courageous youth was obliged to turn and defend himself against his enemy. Ill enough it doubtless would have fared with the victim of this cowardly attack, whose slight and tender frame was but poorly fitted to an encounter with the big and bony miscreant who now attacked him,

had not Maudsley, bursting at last from his concealment, sprung with a bound towards the ferocious Rednape.

"Stop, thou cowardly thief," cried he indignantly; "unhand that slender boy, and face a man, if thou hast courage enow for aught but robbing hen-roosts. Turn here, or by heaven, I will clip thy other ear for thee upon the spot, and cheat the pillory of its due."

Rednape, thus purposely taunted by Maudsley, who wished to divert his rage from the stranger to himself, turned suddenly from the pursuit of the weaker enemy, and rushed ferociously at his new assailant. Maudsley received his onset with composure, parried successfully a desperate blow aimed at his head, and dealt him in return a crushing stroke with his sword which nearly severed the ruffian's right arm from his shoulder, and sent him bleeding and howling back to his companions. Cakebread and the two others, who had been but just enabled through the deepening twilight to witness the sudden arrival of this new protector of the stranger, and the result of his conflict with their champion, desired to see no more of a controversy whose aspect was thus decidedly changed, but, without more ado, took to their heels, and ran with headlong haste to the palace, not even waiting to see whether their wounded confederate, who had sunk exhausted and groaning upon the field, were alive or dead.

The field being thus cleared of the ruffians, the stranger, who had stood stock-still upon the arrival of Maudsley's unexpected assistance until the issue of the contest, now advanced towards his deliverer.

"We meet again, Harry Maudsley," said he, with the silvery accents in which Maudsley instantly recognised the voice of his mysterious companion at Naumkeak. "We meet again, Harry Maudsley, and truly I may thank your most opportune assistance, that we do meet once more in this weary world. Truly I do thank you, and from my heart, for your bravery, al-

though, alas, you would wonder that I should thank you for so worthless a boon as life, could you read my heart this night."

"I supposed, indeed," replied Maudsley, "that it was my enigmatical and most shadowy friend, whom I had the pleasure of assisting. You may spare your encomiums upon my bravery, for it needed none to whip away a pair of cowardly curs, like those who presumed to meddle with you. But what do you here amid this wild and worthless crew, and what means the cowardly attack which was even now made upon you?"

"Why I am here," replied the other, "I could hardly myself explain, saving that I am but an instrument in the hands of others, or rather, perhaps, because I yield without hesitation to a destiny which hurries me hither and thither, like a withered leaf before the whirlwind. You would with difficulty understand my purposes, even if I should endeavor to explain them. As to the obstacles which yonder ruffians interposed to my departure, it is no mystery to me, although no doubt to you it is somewhat inexplicable, and for the present at least must so remain."

"You still speak in parables," answered Maudsley. "We meet, in gathering twilight, in lonely forests, drawn together by some irresistible influence, as if our fates were bound together by an invisible chain. And yet I have hardly gazed upon your face, except through dim shadows; you appear to me, and you vanish, like some spiritual inhabitant haunting these solitudes."

"Distress yourself no longer, Master Maudsley," interrupted his companion. "I am, I do assure you, no unearthly sprite, but healthy flesh and blood. I am now about to bid you farewell, with one word of consolation. I swear to you, then, that what you most dread shall never happen, that what you have almost ceased to hope, shall yet occur. Believe me or not, but when to-morrow's sun shall first shine upon you, you shall acknowledge my power, for you shall already behold its influence.

You shall feel still more sensibly that we are indeed bound together by a chain, and you may, perhaps, remembering the fidelity with which I have hitherto observed my promises, be the more disposed to trust me for the future. And now farewell, Harry Maudsley, and if you value the continuance of our friendship, follow me not."

The stranger extended both arms through the gathering gloom towards Maudsley, as if he would have embraced him. Maudsley advanced more closely, and it seemed as if his companion's arms for an instant touched his neck. In another moment he had vanished into the depths of the forest.

"'Tis strange," muttered Maudsley, after his strange companion had left him. "So gentle and so frail a form, and yet so imperious an air, so bold a heart, so wayward a mood, so mystic a fancy."

He turned away, but suddenly as he advanced, his ear was struck by a deep groan, as of one in pain.

"Hey-day, who speaks?" cried Maudsley, suddenly startled from his reverie, and immediately afterwards recollecting more distinctly what had happened so short a time before. "By heavens, if that be really the voice of Humphrey Rednape, perhaps I may have some ocular proof that the whole scene hath not been a creation of my imagination."

Groping his way towards the spot whence the groans proceeded, he soon became aware of the presence of the unfortunate Rednape. Finding that his wound, although attended with a very profuse loss of blood, did not seem to be so dangerous as he had at first supposed, he left him lying upon the ground, while he coolly paused for a moment at the door of the palace upon his way to his own hut, and recommended the condition of the suffering ruffian to the particular regards of several of his fraternity. Rejecting very peremptorily all entreaties

upon the part of the sovereign, to enter the palace and partake of the concluding festivities, and with eye, ear, and brain wearied with the fantastic scenes of which he had been all day long an unwilling witness, he sought relief and repose in the humble solitude of his own dwelling.

Long and loud was the merriment within the palace. Fierce and furious was the revelry, whose discordant din vexed hour after hour the solemn ear of night. But we willingly drop the curtain over the concluding scenes of the Merry-Mount holiday.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MINOTAUR.

Upon the afternoon of a glowing and sultry day, the solitary of Shawmut was sauntering beneath the ample shade of the oaks and chestnuts which decorated his natural park.

A few weeks had passed since the events recorded in the last chapter, and the fervid summer had already succeeded to the coy and reluctant spring. It was early June, but, as is not uncommon in a climate which loves the intense so much as ours, the heat was already that of mid-summer.

The verdure of the forest as well as of the open glades was of that tender and peculiarly vivid green, which marks the summer's infancy; and the many flowering trees and shrubs which, for a few brief weeks, decorate themselves at this genial season with their brilliant garlands, seemed to have changed the stern wilderness scene where the exile dwelt to a gay and painted garden. The red rose and the wild eglantine festooned themselves about the sterile cliffs; innumerable dogwood trees, scattered profusely through the woods, displayed their large, white, magnificent flowers; the laurel upon the hill-sides blushed with its rose-colored chalices; the dainty privet, which loves the abode of man, hung over the rude palisades and tortuous fences its clustering and snowy panicles; the gaudy iris and the purple flower de luce made the fountain's edge, the brook-side, and the damp meadows gay; while from the stern and hideous morass, which bounded one side of the park, was diffused the delicious odor of the azalea, that obscure and hidden shrub which makes an atmosphere of fragrance about the foul and repulsive swamps

where it abides, like a sweet and virtuous soul sanctifying, by its own perfume and beauty, the most squalid and cheerless haunts of humanity. The woods, the hills, the plains were vocal with the melody of a thousand birds, rejoicing in the return of summer's genial warmth. The swift and busy swallow darted to and fro about the roof of the cottage; the clear, cheerful note of the quail, calling and responding to his mate, sounded incessantly from the edge of the wood; the plaintive and monotonous melody of the thrush resounded throughout the innermost depths of the forest; while in the open glades, swinging and balancing himself upon the most slender twigs, the merry bobolink executed in masterly style his brilliant bravuras, and impromptu variations.

The golden summer day had been spent by the gentle exile in protracted wanderings through the forests which girded his lonely home. As the sun was sinking behind the hills, he emerged from the shadow of the trees where he had so long been lingering, and, staff in hand, began to ascend the crag which rose immediately above his dwelling. When he had reached the summit, he seated himself upon his favorite spot, and looked out upon the summer sunset. The day had been one of fierce and unmitigated heat, but towards evening the white and cumulous clouds had rolled up, pile upon pile, before the gentle breath of the south-west wind, and now, broken into wild and fantastic masses, and colored by the departing sun-shine with purple, gold, emerald, violet, and every other radiant hue, they stretched in a flood of glory along the western horizon, now building themselves up like the walls and battlements of towered and aerial cities, now changing to a shadowy but innumerable army, crowding cohort after cohort, with glittering spear and shield and crimson banner, around the descending chariot of the god of day.

Quivering gently above the sunset's glow, just where the clear blue of the upper sky was mingling with the emerald green

nearer the horizon, appeared the young moon's silver bow. Far along the northern edge of the horizon played the lambent summer's lightning, incessant, gentle, innocent as an infant's smile. Throughout the massive foliage of the scattered trees, which reared themselves along the precipitous sides of the hill, sighed the cool breath of the evening wind. Soothed by the gentle influences of the scene, and refreshed by the grateful breeze, the solitary sat gazing long and musingly upon the wilderness scene, which had already grown dear to his heart.

The purple hues of evening were already settling upon the landscape, when the hermit heard a footstep ascending the narrow pathway, and looking downwards, he saw presently the tall form of Sir Christopher Gardiner advancing towards him. He felt a slight sensation of impatience at this interruption to his solitude. The knight and himself were connected by a slight and single thread. Blaxton claimed to hold the peninsula of Shawmut by eminent domain, acknowledging for himself, as he said, no suzerain but the Lord of Hosts. He had, however, so far recognised the rights of Sir Ferdinando Gorges in Massachusetts as to allow his own name to be inserted in John Oldham's lease from the Gorges family, as one who would induct the lessee into the property on the opposite promontory. He troubled himself, however, but little with such matters, and laughed at the notion of sovereignty in the wilderness.

"Good even, most contemplative hermit of the desert," said the knight, as he reached the summit, "truly the path to this eyrie of yours is something of the steepest. You should have the wings as well as the gentleness of the dove, to inhabit this mountain top."

"Good even to you, Sir Knight," answered Blaxton, "I am, as you say, but as a partridge hunted in the mountains, but I care not. I have escaped the snare of the spoiler, and I love to

ascend to these contemplative heights, and look down upon the world below me."

"Aye, Master Hermit; but methinks thou shouldst have the wings of eagles, as I but now remarked. My frame is somewhat of the hardiest, and my lungs of the soundest, but truly this precipice is something of——"

"I carry the patriarch's ladder with me always," interrupted Blaxton, "and climb from earth to heaven as I list."

"Truly a convenient piece of furniture," answered the knight, humoring the humorist, "and one that would be invaluable in more professions than one. By St. John, half a dozen such scaling ladders in a siege, would make short work of the strongest citadel built by mortal hands. I find you as discursive and contemplative as ever. I guessed, when I tracked you to this aerial summit, that I should find you still farther removed in spirit from the dull earth which we have the misfortune to inhabit. Know you, perchance, to pass to other and more trivial matters, that the saints of Plymouth are mightily enraged at the mad pranks lately enacted in the bay by my merry gossip, Thomas Morton, and that there be serious intentions of forthwith ejecting him from his present abode by force of arms?"

"Truly," answered the solitary, whose hermit life had so much increased his natural absence of mind that he rarely heard more of any companion's observations than sufficed to direct his musings a little from their previous track, without by any means bringing him into perfect communication with the other's mind. "Truly I have but little sympathy with your saints, whether of New Plymouth or of other regions. It seemeth strange to me that a brotherhood of martyrs, who have fled to the wilderness for conscience sake, should so clumsily have left their consciences behind them, that the apostles of liberty in things spiritual, should have been so careful to bring with them from the land of slavery, the old bolts and shackles

which have so long been festering upon their own limbs. A martyr it seemeth is but a bigot after all, and our fugitive martyrs have been somewhat too careful to bring a brand from the funeral pyres of their murdered brethren at home, to light new faggots for their own victims in this barren wilderness. If poor humanity be so helpless and crippled, what matter whether it hobble to heaven on crutches supplied to its infirmity by an anointed prelate or a self-elected saint? Is it not strange, Sir Knight, that none of your learned and your bold reformers have possessed wit enough to solve the mighty riddle of their age? Verily, it seemeth to me, that this eternal warfare of religion, which hath so long brooded with its gloomy wings over the whole of Christendom, that this fierce and oppressive sphinx, which hath so long appalled the souls of men with its fearful presence, doth but propound a riddle, by whose solution it would be annihilated."

"And have you discovered," replied the knight, "in the course of your lonely contemplation, the mystery of the sphinx?"

"I have read the riddle," answered the solitary, "and the answer is Toleration. This mighty reformation, of which we hear so much in many lands, and which hath hitherto proved in England but a mockery, is naught, so long as one fetter remains upon liberty of conscience. What matter that the scarlet mantle of Babylon should be rent into tatters to show the corruption which those gorgeous robes conceal? What matter that priests should be proved to be mumming mountebanks and mercenary quacks, so long as still some other fantastic delusion is to succeed, so long as the whole contest is but a petty struggle between rival impostors? 'Tis by pondering on matters such as these, that I have a little estranged myself from my kind, perhaps, for I feel something within my bosom which rebels at tyranny in whatever form it may disguise itself. I have built my solitary

altar here upon this fair mountain-top, where I can commune, eye to eye, with the Creator of the universe. Truly he reveals himself to me, not through the awful thunderings amid which he appeared to the fierce prophet upon Sinai's mount, but rather seemeth he to speak to my heart with the gentle whispering of a loving father. Sometimes it seemeth to me here, in this fresh and unpolluted solitude, as if the vanished days of the old and sinless world, when the Lord walked in the garden with the patriarchs, might be renewed, and that his loving counsels might be intelligible to every human ear."

As the solitary paused, Sir Christopher, who, as may easily be imagined, had taken but small interest in the discursive and moralizing soliloquy of the hermit, but who knew by experience of how little advantage it was to attempt to arrest the course of his vagaries, replied: —

"Most virtuous hermit, your words are indeed the words of wisdom, and I have a profound satisfaction in finding how much we sympathize in our views of human nature. But unhappily, O most contemplative of mortals, I have not been endowed with that generalizing and philosophical spirit, which enables you to draw such sublime results from your meditations. This poor machine of mine, look you, hath been constructed for action, and I feel it already corroding in its present quiet. Furthermore, if, as you say, the human race be so fond of persecution and tyranny, why what proves it more than that they were born to be persecuted and tyrannized, and that the only method to save them from each other is to govern them altogether? If men love ceremonies, pageants, and formulas so dearly, what proves it after all, but that man is not a metaphysical abstraction, but an unlucky biped, who reasons only through his senses, and who must be governed through his senses. And now, taking leave of metaphysics, I would either bid you farewell upon your mountain-top, or accompany your footsteps to the vale beneath."

Blaxton, as may be supposed, had hardly profited much by the disquisition which the knight had given him in exchange for his own, but, observing by his guest's motions, that he was about descending the hill, he mechanically arose from his seat, and accompanied him along the south-western declivity, towards the western cove.

"The door of my poor hermitage is ever open," said the solitary, as they reached the vicinity of his abode, "and I could be well pleased, Sir Knight, to offer you its poor hospitality."

"I am bounden to you, Master Hermit," answered Sir Christopher, "but I must even make the most of the gentle breeze which I see yonder is just curling the surface of the water. I have a considerable voyage before me to night, and I sought you upon my way, trusting to communicate to you one or two important matters. I pray you to honor me with your attention a few brief moments."

"Willingly, willingly," answered the hermit, who had not heard a word of his companion's remarks, "and I am truly pleased to find you as prone as myself to philosophical speculation. A petty world, Sir Christopher, a petty world and a petty people. A stale cheese at best, be its maggots ever so busy. The night is like enchantment, the wilderness under this young summer moon shines like a silver garden. I must saddle the archbishop, by your leave, and even take a canter."

With this the whimsical hermit very gravely walked off towards his homestead, leaving the knight standing near the beach, quite alone and very much disconcerted.

"Was ever such a brain-sick, moping, moon-struck owl!" said Gardiner to himself. "The creature has even flown away from me, after all, in the very breath with which he assured me of his undivided attention. However, the evening is yet young, I will at least await for a little while his re-appearance."

So saying, Sir Christopher threw himself upon the turf under a spreading tree, and solaced himself for a few moments by contemplating with extreme attention the play of the gentle moonlight upon the waters. As the knight, however, was not blessed with the habit of imperturbable and reposing rumination which marked the character of his late companion, and as he had not sought the promontory of Shawmut that night to gaze at the moon, he naturally, after a little time, became very impatient again.

Just, however, as he was upon the point of taking his departure, he heard a hurried trampling upon the north-western extremity of the beach. He turned and saw the hermit, mounted upon a very handsome mouse-colored bull, which he had brought with him from England, and tamed for his own riding,* careering in a rapid gallop, along the sandy margin of the cove. His loose robes and long grey hair were streaming wildly in the summer wind, and as he flitted through the moonlit scene, he looked more like a fantastic creature of the imagination than an actual inhabitant of earth.

Gardiner had seen many things and many people in his day. He had, moreover, become very familiar with the eccentric and flighty character of the recluse; but he fairly rubbed his eyes, as this wild creature flitted rapidly to and fro upon the yellow sands, passing and repassing before his eyes with extraordinary velocity, the bull lashing his sides with his tail, and evidently enjoying the sport as much as his master, to whose every impulse he seemed astonishingly obedient. It really seemed to the knight that he must either be the victim of some optical delusion, or that the singular metamorphosis of the gentle, dreaming hermit, into this mad Minotaur, rushing up and down the beach in the moonlight, argued the possession of some

* Historical fact.

preternatural power on the part of his companion. He looked calmly on, however, and awaited with patience the termination of the hermit's gallop, as he had one or two matters which he wished to confide to him, before he took his departure. After rider and animal seemed temporarily exhausted by their race, they suddenly halted, close to the knight, who still lay stretched beneath a tree which grew very near the beach.

"We were talking of the Reformation," said the recluse, speaking in the same calm and gentle voice which was habitual with him; "but I need not remind you that we have ever been in England even far behind the Continent of Europe. The Reformation, the world over, has been unsuccessful, because, when men are once up to the knees in blood, their virtue is apt to be soaked out of them; but after all, something was accomplished — something more was attempted. Indeed, Luther and Calvin were two trumpets, whose peals even now reëcho to the world's end, — two rams'-horns, whose spirit-stirring blasts were potent enow to batter down the outworks of the popish Jericho; but they are cracked and broken now, and fit only for children's playthings. I tell you it now needs an archangel's trump not to awaken men from their lethargy, for they are awake, but to startle them from their wilful and hopeless madness.

"For my own part," said Gardiner in reply, without manifesting any astonishment at the hermit's proceedings, "I care not whether the pontifex maximus be Pope Harry, who burns a schoolmaster for beating him in an argument about transubstantiation, and gives a convent's revenue to a woman who makes a pudding to please him — Pope Elizabeth, the holy virgin, who, unlike her father, does not marry, and therefore rarely murders her paramours — Pope Jamie, who finds it so much pleasanter to be pope than ruling presbyter, or Pope Charlie, who will not be comfortable, till he has unpoped himself and feels upon his neck again the foot of his real and Roman holiness. I care not one

jot indeed, whether I have Harry or Charlie, Julius or Gregory, Tudors, Stewarts, or Borgias, to direct my worship, and to smooth my path to heaven. I have other ——"

"Excuse me, Sir Knight," interrupted the hermit, "but I even paused to give a little breathing time to Bishop Laud, here," continued he, patting the neck of the animal which he bestrode, and to whom he had given the name of the arch-enemy of the Puritans. "Poor fellow, he puffs enow to shame his godfather. There is a prelate, Sir Christopher, will mount the devil's back and ride him off his legs. Satan himself will be spavined before his career is over. Then go thy ways, bishop," he concluded, suddenly dismounting, and suffering the animal to wander and graze at will through the park; "I will have more mercy upon thee than thou wouldst have upon the Puritans, or the devil himself. And now, Sir Knight, I think you had somewhat to impart to me."

"Simply this," said Gardiner, whose accurate perception always informed him exactly when a word or two would reach his companion's mind, and who never showed, by his manner, that he found any deviation from the strictest common-place in the hermit's erratic demeanor — "simply this, and I crave your pardon for not having communicated the matter before. Thomas Morton hath incurred the enmity of the Plymouth brethren by many mad pranks by him committed, more especially by an uproarious frolic for eight and forty hours' long at May-tide. Thomas Morton will be attacked by an army of saints. He will be expelled from his residence, and sent prisoner to England. All this will happen within thirty days, and yet the reckless rioter will not believe it. These papers, however, which I have withdrawn from his keeping, I wish to intrust to your hands." With this the knight took a sealed packet from his bosom and placed it in the hands of the hermit, who was listening with attention. "Mixed with them are several important papers

of my own, which I do not consider so safe in my own temporary domicile as they will be with you, the more so, as this untoward event which is so soon to take place, hath induced me to make some alteration in my plans, and will, perhaps, cause my absence from these places for a season. The papers relate, mostly, to the affairs of Sir Ferdinando. You will, however, perceive that the departure of Morton, which I foresee and have accordingly provided against, although he is resolute in his own disbelief thereof, may be yet turned to good. I do not regret the opportunity of being able to communicate through a trusty ambassador, with Sir Ferdinando, except of the necessary procrastination which it it causes."

"Sir Knight," answered the hermit, "I take these papers, which you no doubt think of extreme importance, and which to me seem as valuable as the last year's leaves. I shall keep them carefully, and in the same receptacle you wot of. I know nothing, or but little, of Sir Ferdinando, I know nothing of your purposes nor projects. I care as little for your schemes as for the schemes of the saints. I have consented, when almost the only dweller in the Massachusetts, to be appointed by the knight to put John Oldham into the possession of his lease; but truly if he has no reliance on any stronger arm than mine, he is likely to remain out of possession for many a long year. Truly there is a certain hard-handed Indian fighter at the opposite promontory, who I think would be more serviceable to Master Oldham than myself. However, the knight is doubtless the best judge of his own matters, and therefore even let my name stand. Have you other commands for me?"

"Thanks, gentle Master Blaxton," answered the knight, "but I have deposited my papers with you, to do which was the principal purport of my visit. I warn you, however, that you will probably ere long receive a summons to join in the pious crusade against the anti-Christ of Merry-Mount. You will be

called to trail a pike in the holy warfare, or your purse will bleed for it."

With this the knight courteously bade the hermit farewell, and, stepping briskly towards the beach, was soon lost from view; while Blaxton, hardly heeding his departure, remained, contemplatively gazing on the sylvan scene before him, now softly lighted by the young summer's moon.

It will be perceived how very little sympathy, either of opinion or character, existed between the knight and the hermit, and how slight and accidental was the band which united them. Blaxton's mind was so honestly and unaffectedly removed above, or at least without, the ordinary sphere of human cares and wishes, and his character, like his life, had through long seclusion and a systematic indulgence of its eccentric humors, become so lonely, that he regarded with comparative indifference the various indications of the projected colonization of the New England wilderness. The high priest of nature, seated in simple but sublime loneliness by the side of his forest fountain, passing his gently monotonous days in exalted communion with his Creator, was likely to look forward rather with a sensation of impatience than of gratification, to the arrival of men who, however earnest and enthusiastic, belonged, as the reader may have already gathered from his conversation, to a sect with whom he felt little sympathy. He, however, felt that in the boundless wilderness there was room enough for nations, and he therefore could not conceive that a few scattered pioneers could in any way incommode each other. For himself, he did not dream that there was a possibility of his own solitude being disturbed, but believed that his rights of property in a wilderness spot which possessed no value but that which was derived from his hands, would undoubtedly be held sacred.

As for Sir Christopher Gardiner, his position was growing intolerably irksome. After having been kept in the dark for a

long time as to the state of the projects and counter-projects for colonizing New England, he had at length, as we have seen, obtained information from his coadjutors at home. The information had, however, proved in the highest degree unsatisfactory. The dilatoriness and lukewarmness of his friends was becoming intolerable. The fiery man of action saw himself condemned to another and a protracted season of languor and inactivity. Instead of his recruits in men, money and munitions, and an approval of his purpose to seize upon and occupy at once all the prominent posts in the country, he received counsels of caution, procrastination, dissimulation. He more than suspected that this growing timidity and hesitation at home was indicative of an inclination to abandon altogether an enterprise which perhaps was beginning to lose its charms. Still, however, with the tenacity of purpose which belonged to his constitution, he kept fast hold upon his own projects, determined not to abandon them so long as one powerful confederate remained to him, and as long as a solitary hope remained of a successful issue.

He was now certain that Sir Ferdinando's project was for the present foiled, or at least postponed. He had received direct information that a company of Puritans had received a grant of land from the company in England, a part of it including a portion of the very territory once conveyed to the Gorges family, and that a body of emigrants, under highly respectable and influential leaders, were immediately to set sail for New England. He was, however, assured that the effort to obtain the grant of a charter from the crown to this company, without which the enterprise must necessarily fail, would be unsuccessful. The attention of government was directed to the seditious, democratic and dangerous character of the sect who were thus, as was insinuated, contemplating the establishment of an independent republic upon these distant territories; and strong opposition was made, both directly and indirectly, by powerful persons, to pre-

vent the accomplishment of their designs. Sir Christopher was particularly enjoined to observe accurately and unceasingly the conduct, conversation and character of the new comers and to keep his associates in England constantly and minutely informed as to all their proceedings, with a view to sustain the charges of their opponents, that the new settlers were not only schismatics but rebels, and that they were thoroughly and bitterly hostile, as well to the monarch's authority in the nation, as to his supremacy in the church. Had there not been some peculiar and private objects to be attained in the wilderness, and had there not been at the moment some peculiarly cogent objections to his visiting England, it is highly probable that the knight would have abandoned the country upon the instant, with a view of expostulating emphatically and personally with his hesitating confederates, and of infusing something of his own vigor and audacity into their minds. As it was, he saw himself condemned to play the spy for a still longer period. Dissimulation and intrigue were not distasteful to him; on the contrary, they formed the very sphere in which his peculiar genius most delighted to exercise itself; but intrigue in the forests, dissimulation in a desert, had but little charms for so accomplished a schemer. He had, however, under the circumstances, nothing for it but to bide his time, and though he chafed at the inactivity which was imposed upon him, he submitted for the present with as good a grace as could have been expected.

The vagaries of Thomas Morton, morever, had given him a good deal of uneasiness. He had constantly warned him how inexpedient it was to excite the jealousy of the other religious settlers, already established in New England, and how necessary it was to the final success of their schemes that the character of himself and his associates should, for the present at least, appear to be discreet and orderly. But reasoning was apt to be thrown away upon the reckless potentate of Merry-Mount, and Gardiner

already began to fear whether he was not likely to derive more injury than benefit from his alliance. Still as the good-humored roysterer possessed many qualities that were highly valuable to him, and as he had been privy, in a considerable measure, to his various schemes, it was the knight's desire to manage him and preserve his alliance. Unfortunately the late May-day festivities at Merry-Mount had excited the wrath and indignation of the Puritans of New Plymouth, among whom Gardiner had carefully established himself during the whole period of Morton's riot. This he had done, both to enable the settlers to contrast the solemnity of his own character with the licentiousness of the master of misrule, and to enable him to observe at once the effects produced upon their minds by the whole proceedings.

For a moment we return to the solitary of Shawmut. The day had been one of fierce and unclouded sunshine, the evening had been cool and serene, but the night which was now approaching seemed to be of another character. The moon had sunk in the west, overwhelmed at her departure by the hosts of dark and shadowy clouds, which seemed to have gathered from every quarter to hurl her from her throne. The north wind blew its trumpet-blast through the shivering woods. The scud flew thick and fast across the upper sky. There was a wild hurtling and trampling in the air, as if from a conflict of invisible and aerial hosts. Suddenly a flaming meteor, larger and more lustrous than a planet, shot completely across the sky, springing up from the north, culminating almost to the zenith, and disappearing in the sea with a crash like thunder. Then the thickly congregated mass of clouds suddenly rolled away, like a scroll that shrivels in the flame, and the hermit saw in the western sky, hanging just above the horizon, the gigantic image of a flaming sword. As he was gazing with a sensation of awe at this strange phenomenon, which displayed itself just after his eyes had been dazzled and his ears stunned by the sudden appearance and

violent explosion of the meteor, it vanished, while a little above the quarter where it had disappeared he distinctly saw the images of four ships, slowly ploughing their way across the blue and unclouded expanse of ether, with snowy sail and flying pennon, each, after a few moments, successively disappearing in a mysterious and ghost-like manner, below the western horizon. The solitary stood gazing at this strange succession of weird and unwonted appearances with a singular trouble in his mind. He stood watching long after the last aerial ship had sunk below the horizon, anxiously awaiting the appearance of some new and still more bewildering phenomenon.

No farther sign appeared however. The clouds gathered again over the face of heaven, the night grew gloomy and starless, the wind, now veering towards the east and freshening to a gale, spread its wings, damp and heavy with ocean mist, across the murky landscape. The hermit, who felt chilled and depressed by the sudden atmospheric change, as well as perplexed by the wild and boding appearances which he had witnessed in the sky, looked fearfully around, lest perhaps the former preternatural but beautiful face, which had not long before appeared to him, might even now be gazing through the dense foliage of the oak tree near which he was standing. He almost dreaded, as he cast his glances slowly around him, to find those dark and mournful eyes looking upon him with the same warning and prophetic expression which they lately wore. But the strange apparition did not return to him that night, although his imagination, strongly excited by the unusual phenomena of nature which had just displayed themselves to him, might easily, it would seem, have bodied forth, out of the melancholy and dreamy fancies which were thronging about his mind, some visible shape of mystery and terror, such as had once before perplexed and haunted him.

With slow and thoughtful step he paced along the verge of the cove, and then entered his lowly cottage.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CAPTURE.

A FEW days after the revels of Merry-Mount had been concluded, the sovereign of that territory was left in almost solitary state in his palace. He had despatched the greater number of his retainers to the inland portion of the country, this being the season when it was usual with them to meet the Indians, make their purchases of beaver, and arrange their future contracts; and there were none left within the precincts of the Mount, save the head butler and the Canary Bird.

Leaving those two worthies in charge of the palace, Master Morton, one fine summer's morning, passed over the river and took his way towards the plantation of Wessaguscus, or rather to what remained of that unsuccessful establishment at that place. A few straggling settlers still lingered in the vicinity, living, however, in the most miserable condition, some of them being actually servants to the Indians, and performing menial offices for a livelihood, although by far the greater portion had made their escape from the unpromising colony; some to Plymouth, some to Merry-Mount, and some, who could command sufficient means, to England.

The fate of the plantation at Wessaguscus, (the earliest settlement in Massachusetts Bay,) was a striking counterpart to that of New Plymouth, and in fact the history of every settlement that was made in the territory of the Massachusetts, by any class of adventurers, except those with whom religion was the ruling motive, shows that some higher and stronger principle of action

than the love of gain, was necessary to maintain a colony in so wild and dreary a solitude.

The vernal period of Massachusetts history bears some resemblance to the spring-time of her climate. If we regard the successive efflorescence of civilization along the edge of the bay, the pale and feeble buds reluctantly expanding their petals one by one, amid a stormy and cheerless atmosphere, many of them frozen and destroyed before unfolding, and the healthiest but faintly quivering upon the black and leafless bough, we shall find that there seems but one single source of vitality, capable of protecting and supporting their faint and slow development.

In warmer climes, under more genial influencs, and inspired by golden dreams of terrestrial wealth and glory, there have been colonies whose beginnings were more brilliant, picturesque, and captivating to the imagination, but they have not unfolded to empires. The broad-leaved tree of the tropics derives its rank luxuriance as much from the stimulating and poisonous influence which it imbibes from the atmosphere, as from the fertility of the soil in which it stands. Magnificent are its foliage, its flowers, its towering shaft, its umbrageous top, but a blast of the hurricane lays it low. The stalwart oak, whose roots descend through beds of sterile gravel and through clefts of frost-riven granite, derives its nourishment from the pure and unsunned veins of living water, and from a thousand subtle and invisible treasures of nature's inmost bosom. The tempests of a thousand years sweep over it in vain.

Morton had passed a portion of the summer's day loitering about the neighborhood, hoping to fall in with certain petty chieftains, of the neighboring tribes, with whom he was in constant habits of intercourse, and with whom he had some particular arrangements to conclude. He had been disappointed, however, and was upon the point of returning to his own domains, as it was already late in the afternoon, when he sud-

denly heard himself called by name. Turning in some surprise at the sound, he saw emerging from a kind of cavern, partly natural and partly artificial, which opened upon the side of a sloping crag, a strange and almost preternatural figure. The creature seemed covered with hair from head to foot, but how much of his hirsute covering was the natural growth of his own hide, and how much had been borrowed from other animals, could not, in the general squalor and filth which covered the whole, be accurately discovered. His head was covered with matted iron-grey elf locks, which circled and twisted in every direction, like a nest of rattlesnakes; the nails of his hands and feet were long and crooked, like vulture's talons; he had a basket on his arm, and held a long pole in his right hand. The expression of his features, as far as could be discerned through the mass of hair and filth with which they were obscured, was something less human than that of an intelligent ourang-outang.

"Master Morton, Master Morton," screeched this creature, suddenly darting out of its cave, and leaping towards the Lord of Merry-Mount.

"How now, thou filthy Caliban — art thou not starved nor scalped yet?" answered Morton, who seemed to have seen the creature before —"What wouldst thou with me, most venerable carrion? Propound, explain, but prithee stand upon the other side of me, for the wind, look ye, sits upon this quarter, and there be certain damp and earthy exhalations, contracted doubtless by thy subterranean mode of life — pauca verba, pauca verba, — thou understandest me, I perceive."

"Master Morton, Master Morton, thou diddest me a kindness once," said this human woodchuck.

"Did I so, indeed?" answered the other; "then prithee, do me another in return."

"Truly I will, your worship. What shall I do to serve you? Shall I dig you a basket of clams? Stay but here, your worship,

and I will be back before you can whistle for me." And with this the creature planted his pole in the earth and began leaping down the side of the hill.

"Stop, stop," cried Morton, "I have no occasion for clams at this present juncture, and truly the favor I meant to ask of you, was simply that thou shouldst forthwith return again into the womb of thy mother earth. Burrow back again, thou most venerable mole, for truly thou makest the daylight hideous. Come back with the owls and the bats, and the toads, and the other noisome things which love the twilight — but the sunlight, believe me, was never made for thee. But stay, I did but jest," added Morton, as the creature, hanging its head and weeping bitterly, began slowly to retreat towards his cave — "stay here, then, and air the inmost chambers of thy mind, by opening them to the breeze and sunlight of improving society. After all, 't is not good to be so solitary. Take thy clam basket and follow me. Thou shalt go with me to Merry-Mount, and shalt dwell in my tent, poor miserable devil that thou art. Come along, I say."

"I say, Master Morton; thou diddest me a kindness once," said the Caliban, turning again towards his companion, and squatting down at the door of his cave.

"So thou diddest me the honor to observe before," answered Morton, "and truly I do even propose to do thee another. I tell thee to follow me to my palace, and forsake thy heathenish haunt and grovelling habits. 'Come live with me, and be my love,' as the worthy Kit Marlowe expresses himself to a more fascinating object, let me hope than thou art ——"

"I cannot away to Merry-Mount," answered the other. "I would go willingly, but I cannot away."

"And why can you not, most hirsute of human creatures?" answered Morton. "Come with me, I say, and that at once, for by the Lord it is growing dark and mirky, and the air looks full of smothered thunder."

"Yes, yes, Master Morton, thunder enough, lightning enough," answered the monster; "I have not lived under ground so long for nothing. I can smell the brimstone when it is boiling. There is thunder brewing up yonder, and plenty of it, and the wind will blow a little perhaps to-night; any body knows that."

"By Jupiter," said Morton, "here is a subterranean philosopher! But what hath all this to do with my invitation to thee. I did bid thee to our palace at Merry-Mount, thunder or no thunder."

"I told thee I could not away," answered the other.

"And why not, pretty one," replied Morton.

"Truly, because I have sold myself to the great god Abamoko, and he hath ordered me to stay here to serve his red children. If I should go away from my cave, who would find ground-nuts for the sachems, who would dig clams for them, who find quails' eggs for the squaws? Sometimes I feel as if I should like to go away. The cave is very cold in winter, and the snow hides the ground-nuts. But the red creatures are very kind. They give me my cap full of parched corn every week when I work for them. I thank thee kindly, Master Morton, but I cannot away to Merry-Mount. I have sold myself to the great god Abamoko."

"Now here is an ingenious fellow," said Morton to himself, who found that the poor crack-brained man of the woods was out of the reach of his arguments. "Now here is a profound philosopher, who has gone farther than ever Christian went before, for he has even turned his back upon our old and respectable Sathanas, and sold himself, soul and body, to an Indian's devil — and a devilish hard bargain he has made of it too. A cap full of parched corn hebdomadally! — *proh pudor!* is that the rate paid for humanity by this pitiful devil? Commend me to honest Mephistopheles after all, and the devil take such sneak-

ing skin-flints as the god Abamoko. But I say, thou subterranean philosopher, what favor did I ever do thee, for which thou expressest so much gratitude, albeit somewhat uncouthly?"

"Thou didst once rescue me," answered the Caliban, "when three red-skins would have destroyed and scalped me. I had pilfered but I was starving. Thou didst save my life, and moreover thou didst give me, besides, a horn of rosa solis."

"I do remember me," exclaimed Morton, "and by Jupiter Diespiter, here is gratitude enow to redeem a city. Here is a poor outcast, burrowing in the ground and feeding on pignuts, who remembereth with gratitude one single horn of liquor, for as to the preservation of thy life, seeing what use thou makest thereof, that can hardly be reckoned a kindness. By heavens, such virtue shall be rewarded. Look upon this, sylvan monster!" And with this Morton held up a hunting flask, of ample dimension, which he carried suspended at his side.

An unearthly grin spread itself over the physiognomy of the wild man of the woods, as he leaped nimbly forward, and eagerly clutched the treasure which was offered to him.

"Aha!" said he, as he greedily applied it to his lips, "aha? this is a greater spirit than Abamoko. I wish I served your spirit, Master Morton, but Abamoko is powerful, and his red children are very kind. Alas, I cannot go with thee to Merry-Mount!"

"Stay where thou art then, in God's name," replied the other, "since thy thraldom is so irresistible; and now farewell, for truly I like not over-well the threatening aspect of yonder clouds, and I have a trifling march before me."

"Alas, alas, thou art going indeed," said the wild man, "and truly I fear much lest mischance should befall thee. I have smelt the thunder all day long as I lay in my cave, and I saw fearful sights in the air last night. But 'tis not the worst, 'tis not the worst! There is a more fearful mischance threatening

thee, Master Morton, alas, alas! to thee who have been so good to me." And here the creature began to weep bitterly.

"Why, thinkest thou I am afraid of the thunder and rain, most delicate of wood spirits?" said Morton, laughing.

"Alas, alas!" blubbered the other, "'t is not the rain, nor the wind, nor the thunder, though they will all be fearful. 'T is the dreadful Captain Standish, the mighty man of Plymouth, that I ——"

"Captain Standish!" exclaimed Morton, "what of the heroic shrimp, what of the most puissant pigmy? speak."

"Alas, alas," replied the other, "I pray thee jest not at that mighty man of wrath."

"Diddest thou never hear," continued he, in a low and mysterious tone, "diddest thou never hear of the fearful plague which swept through this wilderness, now many years ago, I know not how many, neither was I here then. Alas, alas! I was then in my own happy home, and had not sold myself to the terrible Abamoko," continued the creature, with the tears running afresh along his grimy cheeks.

"Did I never hear of it," cried Morton, "why thou most uninstructed pagan, did I not see it? Was not I, Thomas Morton, Prince of Passanogessit, travelling through these rugged wildernesses at the very time when that same distemper ceased? Did I not, who knew that the Indians were ceremonious and careful in the offering of burial rites to their dead, did not I, when wandering through the places where they had dwelt, and whence they had all vanished, see them all lying in heaps like autumn leaves, old and young, sachems, warriors, squaws, and papooses, all rotting together unburied in the wilderness, with the wolves, and the kites, and the carrion crows feasting upon their carcases? Did I not believe that I had got to Golgotha instead of to the Massachusetts, and what then wilt thou tell me

of this plague, and what the plague hath this plague to do with Captain Shrimp?"

"Knowest thou not then, Master, that the plague still exists?" continued the other in the same hoarse and boding tone.

"Quite the contrary, my rustic friend," answered Morton, "I know that it hath surceased well nigh these ten years."

"The plague exists, Master," said the other, still in the same hoarse and earnest accents. "It hath gone to sleep, but it exists still, it hath folded its wings, but it is alive, and it will soon fly over the land again; so beware of the mighty man of Plymouth, Master!"

"It hath gone to sleep, hath it?" answered Morton.

"Aye, truly, Master, the great God Abamoko himself hath told me so, often and often, as he visited me by night in my cave."

"So the God Abamoko visits thee nocturnally," answered Morton. "Excuse me, but his highness seemeth somewhat addicted to low company."

"Alas, alas!" answered the monster, "he comes by night, and fastens the fetters upon my legs; they are red-hot iron, and they burn me to the bone; he screws them tight, and my flesh smokes, and my blood boils, and my brains fry."

"What detestable and unfeeling cookery," answered Morton; "now may Satan himself consume such a boiling, frying, scorching devil as Abamoko. Why in the name of Beelzebub don't you fly away in the day-time?"

"Because he makes me swear every night to serve him and his red children faithfully. Because he hath burned and branded me for his own; because the fetters are always there in the day-time, although invisible and looser than in the darkness."

"And where in the foul fiend's name broodeth this plague that terrifies you thus?" replied Morton. "Where doth it roost? Mayhap it were as well to find its nest at once, and crack all its eggs before it hath time to hatch them."

"Ah," continued the outcast, in the same solemn tone, "jest not, I pray thee, with such fearful matters. Knowest thou not then in very truth, that the hero of Plymouth keepeth the plague in a barrel, safely stowed in the cellarage of his own house, and that if he list, he can let it loose to fly over the whole country?"

"Whew!" exclaimed Morton, "so the murder is out. So Captain Shrimp is the devil's head butler, is he, and hath the care of his choicest casks? And how, I pray thee, hast thou made this notable discovery of the treasures of the Plymouth cellar?"

"I tell thee, Master," continued the other, "that the red children of Abamoko all know whence came the fearful pestilence many years ago, and they know 'tis the Englishman's devil and the scourge of red men. Abamoko himself hath told them where it is confined, and who keepeth the keys of its prison. This is why they all fear the Englishmen so much, and the hero of Plymouth most of all."

"Truly a most admirable device," answered Morton. "Ah, valiant Miles, ah, truculent Shrimp, thou hast, indeed, a trick or two worth knowing. Bless thy witty brains, I could almost worship thee. And thou wert in London but lately, and in the very midst of the plague, too, and escapedst unharmed. 'Twas the very vintage season for thee, no doubt, and there didst thou fill thy hogshead for wilderness consumption. The pestilence in a puncheon, forsooth! No wonder these deluded savages fear thee as the roaring lion!"

"Hush, hush," exclaimed his companion, who seemed quite shocked at the irreverent manner in which his astounding piece of intelligence was received; "hush, hush, hearest thou not yonder distant thunder? I tell thee it is ill jesting upon these awful matters. Ah!—what a peal was that! Abamoko is full of wrath;" and with these words the lunatic coiled himself into

a heap upon the ground, moaning dismally, while his teeth chattered with fear.

In effect, the weather had began to assume a somewhat threatening aspect. The day, which had been one of intense heat, was already drawing to its close, but there was no freshness, no evening coolness in the atmosphere. The sun had sunk beneath a long, dense mass of leaden clouds which lay motionless along the horizon, but the whole upper surface of the heavens still glowed like burnished brass. Not the faintest breath of wind was perceptible, and the gigantic oaks and chestnuts, which grew around the spot, stood with their massive foliage darkly painted upon the brazen sky, the outline of almost every leaf so sharply defined, and every branch so fixed and motionless, that the very forest seemed enchanted. The silence was oppressive, not a twig rustled, not a bird sent forth a solitary note, not an insect murmured. Nature seemed so spell-bound and breathless, that it was a relief to Morton's ear, when the distant and muttered thunder, which was hardly audible, and which, however, seemed so sensibly to affect his companion, at last interrupted the boding silence.

There were certainly some symptoms of an approaching storm, although it seemed probable that it would be long before it broke forth. Although it was past sunset, and although the western edge of the horizon was dark and gloomy, yet there seemed a singular and inexplicable radiance in the sky. Long bars of brilliant light seemed to be projected upwards from some source far away from the quarter where the sun had sunk; and as evening advanced, instead of the shadowy and refreshing twilight, the brightness of the sky seemed with every instant to increase. While the portion of the west, which would naturally have been tinged with the last glowing colors of the departed day, retained the same dull and sombre hue, there was spread over the rest of the sky a thin rack of flame-colored vapor,

which seemed to radiate an intense degree of heat and light. Wild and ragged clouds of a dull green hue, were driving with fearful velocity across this blazing surface, indicating that while the deceitful and brooding calm still lingered below, there was already a fierce commotion in the upper atmosphere.

Morton stood looking at these various and portentous appearances, with the eye of a man whom long experience in the wilderness had taught to read the book of nature with great accuracy.

"There is no mistaking such ugly signs as these," said he, rather to himself than to his companion. "It needs no misbegotten gnome, coming from the bowels of the earth, to tell me that there will be a devilish pother of the elements before I can get back to Merry-Mount. Now, although the weather be June, and the distance home but ten miles, yet I would rather empty a tankard in the poorest hedge ale-house between London and Staines, than run all night through these slippery thickets, with nothing to light me on my path but the lightning, which is a mighty zig-zag and uncomfortable kind of link bearer."

"I tell thee, Master," croaked out the lunatic, as he lay coiled and shuddering in a heap, "profane not thus the name of the mighty and fearful hero of Plymouth. Deride not, neither, the terrible Abamoko. He rushes even now over our heads, astride the thunder."

"Faith, then," answered Morton, "I wish he would even take me up on his pillion behind him. As for the heroic Captain Standish, whose name, it seems, is not to be profaned, I beg thee, in case that he, as well as Abamoko, should pay a visit to thine humble abode, to present to him my warmest congratulations and regards. Tell Captain Standish, moreover, that should his leisure allow, it would gratify me deeply to receive him at my poor palace at Merry-Mount, the rather that I have

heard some casual intimations of an intended visit on his part, and ——"

"Your presence here will save Captain Standish that trouble," suddenly exclaimed a stern voice at his side. Morton turned hastily round, and to his infinite amazement, beheld Miles Standish, standing close to him with his drawn sword in his hand. At the same instant he felt himself suddenly seized from behind by several powerful arms, and before he had time for a single struggle, he beheld himself a prisoner. At that very moment there was a louder and more prolonged peal of thunder, at which the lunatic uttering a sudden and sharp cry of horror, started to his feet, looked fearfully round, and then vanished into the bowels of the earth.

END OF VOLUME I.

MERRY-MOUNT;

A ROMANCE

OF

THE MASSACHUSETTS COLONY.

"O, if we could but see the shape of our dear mother England, as poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please, how would she appear, think ye, but in a mourning weed, with ashes upon her head, and tears abundantly flowing from her eyes, to behold so many of her children exposed at once, and thrust from things of direst necessity * * * * * * * * and to avoid insufferable grievances at home, enforced by heaps to forsake their native country." — MILTON.

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MERRY-MOUNT.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAREWELL.

When Henry Maudsley arose from a brief and feverish slumber, upon the morning following the May-day revels, he was for some time at a loss to determine whether the strange events of the preceding evening had not all been a delusion and a dream. The wild accents of the mysterious youth who had been his companion during the concluding hours of the day were still haunting his imagination, but who the stranger was, whence he derived such singular knowledge of his own history and most secret thoughts, and for what reason he had conceived so lively an interest in his welfare, it was beyond his power to imagine.

"She shall yet be thine, Harry Maudsley," the promise uttered by that melodious voice still rang in his ear. As he repeated the words mechanically to himself, lifting his hands as he did so towards his head, he suddenly felt something unusual about his throat. What was his surprise, as he sprang forward to the light, to find suspended from his neck the very golden chain which he had seen Esther present to Gardiner at the conclusion of that fatal interview which had so lately destroyed his dearest hopes!

He gazed at the glittering relic, emblem of the perfidy of one for whom he could have found it in his heart to forfeit both earth and heaven, in speechless bewilderment. He clasped it to his heart for one moment, at the next he tore it from his neck and dashed it to the ground with the fury of a madman. Suddenly he recollected more of the mysterious words of his late companion. He remembered the bold prophecies with which the stranger had flattered his heart; he remembered the promise that a proof of his power should be displayed to him upon the dawn of this very morning, and behold already the glittering pledge was there. The mystery now was more perplexing than ever. It was almost impossible for him to resist the conviction that he was the victim of some magic spell. Witchcraft could alone account for the mysteries which were spread over him like a net. And to what end had these subtle sorceries been woven? What was to be the issue of the strange and twilight companionship which had suddenly sprang up between himself, and, as it seemed to him, this shadowy wanderer from some unknown world? Were his purposes good or evil? Was he abusing the mystic power which he possessed over his mind, to lead him to destruction, or was he a beneficent genius, suddenly appearing to him as he stood upon a fearful precipice, to warn him of his danger, and to lead him back into the paths of happiness whence he had wandered so far? Was Esther likewise subject to the influence of this mocking spirit? 'Twas mystery all. Again he lifted the chain from the ground, and gazed long and anxiously upon it, as if he would examine every slender link till he learned wherein lay concealed the heart of its mystery. But the chain revealed not the secrets of the magician, although it indeed seemed endowed with a magic of its own.

For an instant, as he dwelt upon the pure image of Esther, he felt that he could have prostrated himself before her as at the feet of an enshrined saint, and have expiated his unworthy and

degrading thoughts with repentant tears. Had he worshipped her so long as if she really dwelt in a purer sphere than his own stormy world, and was he now to disown all the past? Was not this an invention of the great tempter? Was it not all devised as a fiery ordeal to test the truth of his devotion? 'T was impossible that there could be one spark of sympathy between two such characters as those of Esther and Sir Christopher Gardiner. More delicate and sensitive than the Venetian goblet, the crystal purity of her character would instinctively reject the subtle poison of that artful mind. He would seek her presence once more; once more he would pour out his heart to her, and, what his pride had hitherto forbidden, he would lay his destiny in her hands and swear that his future life should be guided by her own wishes. Thus struggling against his convictions, hoping against his hopes, the heart of Maudsley was tossed to and fro upon a stormy sea of passion and of doubt. Then his eyes again fell upon the fatal chain. The snake-like smile of Gardiner, as he stood in the twilight of that eventful evening, again flashed upon his memory. Again the words of the mysterious unknown recurred to him, and he did indeed acknowledge that both their destinies seemed bound together by a chain. 'T was strange indeed, he thought, as he gazed upon that fragile plaything, that the fate of so many beings should be entangled in those slight and golden meshes.

It so happened that the earnest enthusiasm of Esther's character had just began to awaken a corresponding emotion in his own breast, even at the moment when all his hopes had been dashed to the earth. He had made his way originally to New England with but one object. He was determined, if possible, to tear Esther from the life of gloomy solitude to which she had so fanatically devoted herself. He had been baffled. His stormy nature vainly dashed itself against the placid but unyielding enthusiasm of her character, as the wild surge dissolves in foam against the marble cliff.

The estrangement which had resulted from the ill success of his violent entreaties and reproaches, would have proved but temporary. The love inspired by such a woman could not be uprooted like a worthless weed. On the contrary, the natural and necessary effect was to increase Maudsley's passion a thousand fold, for enthusiasm is apt to inspire respect, even where it fails to elicit sympathy. The wild scenes into which he had plunged, to bury, if possible, the recollection of his love — the profligate and fantastic creatures who had surrounded him like a horde of unholy spirits, had produced a strange and sudden effect upon his mind. His nature, although not fickle, was impressionable. All that surrounded him in the wilderness was odious, and his heart panted after the serene image of Esther with a renewed and redoubled devotion, as if her presence alone could give light to this dreary and desolate land — could exorcise the evil demons who seemed ravening for him as their prey. His mind was indeed beginning to awaken to a deeper appreciation of her lofty character. The contrast between the purity of her life and the unhallowed ribaldry in the midst of which he had lately dwelt, had spoken to him in trumpet tones. His heart was softened, his pride humbled, his resolution weakened. His whole nature was ready to receive a durable impression, perhaps at their very next interview. Deep was already calling unto deep, and from the profoundest recesses of his heart, there had arisen at last an answering murmur to her own.

It was at this very point that the great misfortune befell him. A few hours before his presence at the fatal interview between Gardiner and Esther, and he knew not what sacrifices he was not prepared to make. He was ready to lay himself at her feet, to implore her guidance along his benighted path. And now he would indeed see her once more. He was impelled towards her irresistibly; but alas! who should say in what such an interview might result?

Upon the afternoon of the same day he found himself at the residence of the Ludlows. Walter was seated under a tree in the neighborhood of the house, lost, apparently, in one of those pensive reveries which were habitual with him. Maudsley looked anxiously around for Esther, but she did not at that moment appear to be in her brother's company, and he was not unwilling to gain a little time to collect his scattered thoughts.

"The heats of summer are already upon us," said he, accosting Ludlow.

"Aye," said Ludlow, acknowledging Maudsley's salutation, "the climate of New England is more intense and more exciting than that of our own land. It is, however, to be considered fortunate that the approaching colony will not arrive like the early Plymouth settlers in the very midst of a rigorous winter, but that some few months will be afforded them to make preparations for withstanding the winter's siege. But I cry you pardon, Master Maudsley, I believe you feel but little sympathy with the matter to which I allude."

"Not perhaps so lively a sympathy," answered Maudsley, "as that which is felt by one who is near and dear to you. It might have been —— but no, the time is past, the feeling dead. I have sought you, Master Ludlow, to inquire if I may, in any thing, be serviceable to you in England," concluded he abruptly.

"And do you purpose returning thither?" answered Ludlow.

"Such is my intention;" replied Maudsley.

"I regret," continued Ludlow, "that no spark of sympathy hath been awakened in your bosom for the sacred cause. There was a time when I had hoped, that in the pure and fervent sentiment which seemed to bind you to the destinies of one very dear to me, there might be found an element of a still more elevated emotion. I grieve to think that this should be all past, Master Maudsley; but I have no disposition and no right to read your heart."

"The heart of man is inscribed with strange hieroglyphics," answered Maudsley, "and happy is he who possesses the key to read the mysteries of his own. For myself, I hardly hazard a conjecture at what may be passing within the souls of those around me, when I find it so difficult to understand my own. Life is a masquerade, and a dull one, Master Ludlow, yet wo to him who would tear the grinning masks from the features of his companions."

"You are almost oracular this evening," answered Ludlow, somewhat perplexed by the singular humor in which his companion seemed to be indulging; "but to recur to what I before observed, I regret extremely to find that no change hath come over your soul, for sooth to say, I had fondly anticipated some such event. 'Tis a disappointment to me, Henry Maudsley, for I felt a warm confidence that the bright morning of religious revelation was really about to dawn upon you. Nay, after the extraordinary conversion of the proud and ambitious knight, it seemed not fantastic to hope for a similar change in so much younger and fresher a soul."

"To whom do you allude?" cried Maudsley, with a sudden start.

"To one whom men call Sir Christopher Gardiner," was the reply.

"And is he, indeed, one of those whose heart hath been suddenly changed?" said Maudsley, governing his emotion by a violent effort, and speaking with perfect calmness.

"Aye, he is, indeed, a striking and living testimonial of grace," answered Ludlow. "I have had long and intimate interviews with him. Without revealing to me the details of his past life, he hath confessed to me that he hath been but little better than one of the wicked. But the Lord hath revealed himself to him suddenly, and at the dead of night. The very hour and moment of his new birth he has been able to fix with

singular precision. I have a firm conviction that this erring man hath made already a comfortable progress in grace, nor do I entertain any doubt of his final justification."

"Indeed," said Maudsley, with an imperceptible sneer, and still speaking with forced composure, "indeed it rejoiceth my heart exceedingly to hear such comforting assurances of one, of whom I had scarcely expected such tidings. If Sir Christopher Gardiner, then, be truly one of the elect, and if his residence in the wilderness is likely to be a protracted one, I may surely congratulate you upon such a valuable acquisition as his habitual companionship must be."

"Aye," answered Ludlow, dropping his voice, and speaking in a confidential tone, "and I have even hopes that the intimacy between us may be hallowed and cemented by a still closer bond of union. You have known me well enough, Master Maudsley, to be certain that it was for a long time the dearest wish of my heart, that the union, which at one time seemed a most likely event, between my sister and yourself, might sooner or later be arranged. Without having been entirely in your confidence, I have, however, at last arrived at the knowledge that Providence, from the first, hath not ordained such a consummation. I am, however, very conscious of the defects of my own character. I can at times look clearly upon the position of Esther and myself; but perhaps I weary you, Master Maudsley."

"Proceed, Walter Ludlow," answered Maudsley, waving his hand impatiently.

"It is then desirable, as you will easily admit," continued the other, "that Esther should have a protector and a companion. How long I may remain a sojourner in this weary world, I know not, but I am at best but a wayfarer and a pilgrim, and it is not right nor fitting that she should thus devote her existence to one whose path is ever through the valley of dark shadows. I repeat it, Esther needs a protector and companion, and such I

believe I have at last found for her. You see, I speak with perfect frankness, Master Maudsley."

"I am honored by your confidence," replied Maudsley, speaking calmly, but in tones so hoarse and unnatural, that almost any one but Ludlow must have been struck by them, "and I am to understand then that the protector and companion so desired for Esther Ludlow, hath at last been found in the person of Sir Christopher Gardiner."

"Even so," answered Ludlow quietly. "To me, the adventures of his past life, whatever they may have been, are as nothing, for I feel an earnest conviction that he is a regenerate man, within whom the Lord hath vouchsafed to renew a right spirit. I believe you have but a slender acquaintance with the worthy knight, Maudsley?"

"Death and furies," muttered Maudsley, who still stood there with wonderful composure, while the blind and dreaming dotard was searing his nerves as with red-hot irons, "am I to endure these tortures forever; pray Heaven he may not urge me to use my influence with Esther in favor of her new suitor and protector! Aye," continued he aloud, in reply to Ludlow's question, "my acquaintance with the worthy knight is but slender, but I trust that an opportunity will soon be afforded me to improve it. He is not at present sojourning in the immediate neighborhood, I believe."

"No," answered Ludlow, "he is at present tarrying, for certain private reasons, at New Plymouth. But he is expected to return to his old residence before many days. I am glad to find you disposed to improve your friendship with him."

"Trust me," answered Maudsley, grinding his teeth and speaking in almost sepulchral tones, "I am only too anxious for an opportunity. May death alone separate us afterwards!"

Ludlow elevated his eyebrows slightly, as he listened to what he considered the somewhat exaggerated expressions of Maudsley,

but he was very far from suspecting what was really passing in his heart. He was indeed one of those who are incapable of reading the most common events which pass around them, to whom the souls of their immediate companions are as sealed volumes, and who are therefore thoroughly incapable of sympathizing with or of benefitting those who are nearest and dearest to them, even with the warmest and purest intentions. If Maudsley had remembered the character of his companion, if he had reflected upon the profound ignorance in which he usually dwelt, as to the feelings of those around him, he would perhaps have appreciated more justly the value of the singular communications which had just been made to him. But he was at the moment the slave of passion, and the whispers of reason were powerless. His soul, upon reaching the residence of Esther, had been filled with the most conflicting emotions. The slow, hesitating communication of Ludlow was the match to the mine. He had, however, governed himself, and the simple-minded Ludlow possessed not the smallest knowledge of the tempest which was raging in his companion's bosom.

"You will find Esther in her garden, I believe," said Ludlow, with sudden abruptness, "and it is fitting that you should confer with her before your departure, which it grieveth me to hear you announce as so imminent. A few letters, however, I may possibly desire to intrust you with. For the present, I crave your pardon for retiring ere the daylight be spent, for I have left a task unfinished. Farewell, for the present; I shall find you at our humble evening meal."

With this Walter Ludlow suddenly entered the house, leaving Maudsley almost overwhelmed.

The evening was dreamy and delicious. Even at that early period of the summer, a few fireflies were already flitting over the moist fields, looking like disembodied spirits, as they fitfully shone, disappeared, and again twinkled into existence, hovering

gently and noiselessly over the damp earth. The shades of evening were gathering, as Maudsley, advancing a few steps from the spot where Ludlow had left him, suddenly saw Esther approaching from the garden. In spite of all his resolution, and notwithstanding the time that had been afforded him for collecting his thoughts, his heart, which had been beating violently, seemed to stand stock-still. His coward blood seemed to retreat upon its citadel, and his whole frame shivered. It was passing strange. But a moment before, and he had felt as if he could have bidden her farewell without the quivering of a nerve. He gazed upon her entranced. For a delicious moment he shut his eyes wilfully to the precipice upon which he was standing, and forgot his stormy past, his dreary future, reckless of all except his idolatrous and irrepressible love. The lava torrent which had overwhelmed his existence had spared one single flower, and with the calm avarice of despair, he slowly plucked it as it grew there upon the edge of desolation. He stood still, and gazed upon Esther, who was not yet aware of his presence, as if in this, his last interview, he would crowd into one brief moment the rapture and the agony of years. Never had she seemed more beautiful. As she stood there, surrounded by the dark and solemn scenery of the forest, where the murmuring pine and the time-hallowed oak mingled their shadows in the advancing twilight, she seemed like some fabled forest spirit, some fountain-haunting Egeria, some rapt and mysterious priestess, suddenly arisen in the silent wilderness to embody the softest dreams of poetry.

Esther started, as, upon drawing nearer, she perceived Maudsley standing motionless in her presence. She was pained at the thoughts of this approaching interview. Although it was impossible for her to forget the past, and although she felt that the feelings which had, as it were, grown with her growth, could never be eradicated from her bosom, yet she had taken her reso-

lution. She had long felt convinced that it was an unfortunate destiny which had thus entangled, as it were, rather than united, the existences of two persons whom Heaven had created so unlike in character and opinion. The bright hopes which she had conceived for the future, in the midst of her joy at the sudden appearance of her lover in the wilderness — the conviction which had been forced upon her, of the earnestness and depth of that passion, which had impelled him to pursue her thus across the world — had all been destroyed and buried in the disappointment which she felt as she discovered that he still remained unchanged.

She greeted him coldly, but without embarrassment.

"We meet again, Esther Ludlow," said he in a hoarse tone, and with forced composure; "we meet once more, and for the last time."

"The last time!" answered Esther, with a trembling voice.

"Aye," answered Maudsley, gloomily. "What hath such an one as I to do in this wilderness. The prize for which I fondly strove has been snatched from my eager grasp. Surely none knoweth better than Esther Ludlow that this desert is no place for me."

"'Tis true," she answered, mistaking his meaning, and speaking with greater firmness. "This gloomy desert is no place for one so light-hearted and so impetuous as yourself. Truly, I marvelled much when you appeared so suddenly in this distant world. I marvel less that you have so soon grown weary of it."

"You know too well," resumed Maudsley, "why I am in this wilderness, but you know not how utterly and absolutely I was ready to lay myself at your feet. When I remonstrated with your determination; when I so violently urged the abandonment of your most cherished projects; even then I felt the influence of what seemed your sublime enthusiasm stealing over my heart."

"Is this indeed true, Henry Maudsley?" interrupted Esther, with a rapturous expression of countenance.

"Even then," continued Maudsley, in the same gloomy tone, without noticing the interruption, "even then I felt a strange influence subduing my nature. How it was I knew not, and cared not, but it seemed to me that an exalting ecstasy had suddenly mingled with and hallowed my earthly passion, when in one fatal moment the spell was rudely broken."

"You speak indeed in parables," interrupted Esther, once more gazing upon him with an expression of wonder.

"And yet I am no prophet nor soothsayer," answered her lover, "but a weak, deluded, erring fool. Whence, and of what nature, was the sublime vision which seemed at one moment to have swept over my senses? Was it a subtle poison distilled within the depths of a treacherous heart, and infused into my very being by the dark magic of a woman's eyes? And was this, only this to be the result of my enraptured trances, which I mistook for the presence of the divine spirit?"

"Henry Maudsley," said Esther with calmness, "so far as I can discover the meaning of your mysterious language, you have dared to couple the term of treachery with my name."

"Aye," answered Maudsley, still speaking like a man in a dream, "aye, 't was indeed a rude awakening, but better thus than that the dark poison should have quite overpowered my senses; and yet, who would dare even to believe his senses? who would not rather brand them as liars and slanderers, than reject the record which an angel's pencil hath written."

"Henry Maudsley!" cried Esther, in an accent of despair, for it suddenly flashed upon her, as she listened to this utterly incomprehensible language, that her lover's reason was unsettled. "Henry Maudsley, for the love of God look not thus wildly upon me. Look me in the face, if you have ever loved me, and tell me in plain language what is this dreadful mystery which seems to cast a shadow over your mind?"

"My suspicions may be baseless," he continued, "pray God they prove so! for your welfare even now is dearer to me than my heart's blood. Remember this, however, else one day the reflection may flash upon you, like lightning from the dark clouds, which seem gathering over both your life and mine. Remember this," continued he, looking fixedly upon her, "that with all his faults and follies, Henry Maudsley was no hypocrite. May God protect you from the inextricable snares of hypocrisy!"

"Hypocrisy, Master Maudsley!" exclaimed Esther, with flashing eyes, "do you dare to charge me with hypocrisy?"

"God forbid, Madam!" was the reply. "I know your spirit to be pure and noble. I bade you beware of hypocrisy, but I meant not that the hypocrisy was in your own heart. Less than I have said, I could not say; more, I have neither claim nor wish to say. Farewell, Esther Ludlow, farewell forever. 'T is a word which I came hither to speak, and now 't is spoken. But one word more, and my task is accomplished. Whatever betide us both, now that we are forever separated, believe me that I have forgiven you. Believing this, you may yet trust to the sincerity of a heart which has been wholly yours. Should that dark day come, as sooner or later my soul prophecies it must, when Esther Ludlow shall require a friend in her utmost need, remember that there is one, if he still exists upon the earth, will cross sea and land, and encounter every danger to avert evil from her head."

"'T is time that this strange and inexplicable scene should cease," answered Esther, who felt deeply wounded, as well as entirely overwhelmed with wonder at what seemed to her the insulting and outrageous demeanor of her companion. "To what hypocritical snares you allude in such a mysterious manner, I know as little as I do the nameless crimes for which you forgive me with such strange magnanimity. I thank

you truly for the confidence which you still place in my character, although I think it would be more kindly exhibited if you would deal more frankly with me. Your riddles are all beyond my intelligence, and seem to me unworthy of yourself. For your generous offer of assistance in the time of trouble, I thank you, but I trust never to be so utterly forlorn, as to require the protection of one who hath been so unjust and so insulting."

With these words, which she uttered with great dignity of manner, although her eyes were blinded with tears, Esther was turning from the spot, when Maudsley hastily detained her.

"But one moment, Esther. I answer not one word to your reproaches, and God shall judge between us two. We stand here in the midst of a wild and mysterious world, whose superstitions we know not, the spiritual tenants of whose forests we know not. That there are spirits, whether of good or evil, who haunt these solemn and sequestered scenes, I know, for I have myself communed with such. But this is from my purpose. I designed to leave with you a pledge of my promise. Despise that promise, if you will — the day may come when you may lack a true and loyal friend. Should that day arrive, look on this chain, and remember Harry Maudsley. And now, farewell, farewell, Esther Ludlow."

As he uttered these concluding words, he suddenly flung the mysterious chain around Esther's neck, and, with a hasty stride, disappeared into the twilight shadows of the forest.

CHAPTER II.

THE ESCAPE.

The expectations of Sir Christopher Gardiner had indeed been proved to be well founded. The lord of Merry-Mount had at last rendered himself so obnoxious to the Puritans of New Plymouth, and the last uproarious proceedings during the May-day festival had been deemed so outrageous, that at last they had determined to eject him from the colony.

Their aversion to him was no doubt mainly founded upon his hostility to their religious tenets, and upon his rantipole mode of life, which was necessarily shocking to their rigid manners. Besides this, he was supposed to be engaged in certain mysterious plots, contrary to the interest and comfort of the Puritanic settlers. He was, moreover, openly accused of dangerous dealings with the Indians, and in particular of supplying them with fire-arms, and teaching them the use thereof, which, according to a proclamation of King James, was an offence against the laws of England.

As for the merry potentate himself, he stoutly maintained that the only crime of which he was guilty was that of being more skilful and successful than they in his trading with the savages, particularly in the beaver trade, which superiority he himself attributed to his better knowledge of the Indian language and character, and to the greater influence which he had been able to exert over their minds. According to himself, he was ever upon the most friendly and harmonious terms with his dusky neighbors, and he repeatedly asserted that he had received infinitely more kindness and hospitality from the heathen than he ever

did from the Christian inhabitants of New England. Envy of his own success was in his opinion the main cause of the grudge which the Plymouth people bore him, and the main reason why they had at last determined upon open hostilities against him.

Although he had, as we have seen, been repeatedly warned of his danger, yet the reckless buoyancy of his character had led him to place but little faith in the evils which impended over him, so that he had in the very time of danger conducted himself like a most unskilful general, and a most impolitic monarch. His forces, which should have been concentrated at his own capital, to protect him against the threatened invasion, were unhappily engaged in distant forays far away in the interior, and the sovereign of Merry-Mount himself now found himself alone, and at a distance from his palace, suddenly confronted and made a prisoner by his most redoubtable enemy.

The apparition of Captain Standish had been so sudden and so unexpected, and the capture of Morton so instantaneous, that it seemed almost as if the Plymouth hero had really been possessed of some of the marvellous attributes ascribed to him by the lunatic, who had just disappeared into his cave. There was something too, in the savage scene around — in the wild and fitful appearance of the threatening sky, in the distant mutterings of the thunder, the stifling atmosphere, and the unnatural light which was streaming from the sky long after the shadows of evening should have covered the earth, which might have inspired a lively or a timorous imagination with a sensation of awe.

There stood the famous captain, armed to the teeth, with uplifted sword and threatening eye, motionless as a statue; and there stood the luckless Morton, with his arms securely pinioned, and surrounded by half a dozen stout fellows, suddenly and completely in the power of the foe whom his lips had just been scoffing.

Morton stood stock-still, looking at the calm and immovable image before him, and for a moment could not but believe himself the victim of a horrid night-mare. 'T was impossible that it could be real. He had heard no footsteps, seen no movement in the thickets, not a leaf had rustled. These six armed men, with that dreaded commander at their head, had risen out of the earth to daunt him. 'T was an invention of the evil one. He had the night before seen the portentous vision of the flaming sword in heaven. It had not moved his soul — why should this terrestrial vision appal him?

"Aroint thee, Sathanas!" said he at last, striving as it were to arouse himself from a dream. "Aroint thee, evil one, and keep thy bugbears to frighten madmen and children withal. I fear them not, they move me not. 'Justum et tenacem proposi'——"

"By the Lord, 't is no fever dream after all, or if it be, 't is a damned obstinate and chronic one of its kind," added he upon finding, after struggling and shaking himself very vigorously, that the armed phantoms did not fade away, and that he was still retained in durance by his captors.

"Thy struggles are useless, thou foolish mischief-maker," said Standish, speaking at last, although still remaining in the same motionless attitude. "Thou art my prisoner, and if thou inclinest to retain that giddy head upon thy shoulders, I would earnestly recommend submission."

"So, the ghost hath a tongue as well as a sword, hath he?" said Morton to himself, in a low, bewildered tone. "And yet, truly, I heard his voice before, but 't was then a fancy of my brain, I thought. By Jupiter, Son of Saturn, here is a pretty predicament for a sachem and a sovereign;" and with this, he relapsed again into meditation, still gazing with a rueful and puzzled expression upon his adversary.

Miles Standish, who thus confronted the Lord of Merry-Mount,

was as small of stature as he was heroic in spirit. Scarcely elevated above the dimensions of a dwarf, he yet possessed so well knit and muscular a frame, that no man who looked upon him, much less one who had seen or felt the vigor of his arm, but would have almost preferred an encounter with a giant than a contest with this small but intrepid hero. His countenance was bronzed with exposure, his features were bold and martial, and his eye was full of fire. Although he was not much past middle age, his temples were bare and his beard grizzled. He was at this moment arrayed in the military costume of the period, and wore a round iron morion, with a narrow rim, upon his head; a cuirass and back-piece of steel, a doublet and hose of tawny leather, and held a long double-edged sword in his hand. His six followers, who were picked men from the Plymouth colony, were likewise clad in the same defensive armor. They were morever armed with long, heavy snaphances, or matchlocks, held long forked staffs, which were called rests, in their left hands, while from their left shoulders and across their chests were suspended broad bandileers, holding a string of charges for their muskets, contained in small tin cylinders. It was very evident that they were out upon an expedition which was considered serious and important.

As for Captain Standish, enough was known by Morton of his character and history, to give him ample assurance that he was not a personage to be trifled with. Although the master of Merry-Mount was very prone, when at his own palace and among his own adherents, to indulge in various witticisms at the expense of the pigmy of Plymouth, yet in his heart he well knew that he was a most intrepid champion and a most dangerous adversary.

Miles Standish was indeed one of the most striking and picturesque characters which appear upon the first and most heroic page of New England's annals. Descended from a younger branch of an ancient and honorable house in England, and the

legal heir to the family estates, which had at last devolved upon him as the head of the family, but which were surreptitiously and unjustly detained from him, he had become wearied of prosecuting his claims amid the thousand obstacles interposed by unjust power and the law's chicanery. He had sought and acquired honorable distinction in the pursuit of arms. He had served with distinction in the Low Countries, in the army which Elizabeth had sent to assist the struggling Hollanders, and after the truce he had served with honor upon other battle-fields. He had made the acquaintance of the pilgrims of Robinson's company, while sojourning at Leyden, and when the emigration to America was resolved upon, he had either volunteered or received an invitation to associate himself with them. Although no rigid Puritan himself, and not a member of their church, his sympathies had been entirely enlisted in their cause, and he had sailed with them in the Mayflower. From the first moment when these poor but heroic outcasts set foot upon the rock of Plymouth, the intrepid Standish had proved a most invaluable assistant to them. His bravery, military experience, iron pertinacity of purpose, insensibility to fatigue and privation of every kind, were qualities which constituted him a most admirable champion and military leader for this small and feeble colony in their dangerous enterprise. Always foremost in every expedition, whether to explore the country, to treat with the savages, or to give them battle when they were disposed to hostility, he was equally serviceable at home in laying out their town, constructing their fortifications, and training and disciplining the colonists in the use of arms.

Considering himself the military servant of the company, he had accepted, without hesitation, the expedition which had been determined upon against the troublesome master of misrule, as the Puritans designated the Lord of Merry-Mount, and had taken with him six trained and trusty fellows, in whose conduct and valor he

most confided. Although it was supposed that Morton had a very considerable body of adherents domesticated near him, yet the number of men composing the expedition was considered quite enough to take possession of his strong hold and to secure his person. With about the same number, Standish had crushed the great Indian conspiracy, and quelled forever the spirit and the hostility of the Massachusetts savages.

It was by pure accident that Standish, upon his way by sea to Merry-Mount had paused at Wessaguscus, and by a still more singular accident that he had chanced then and there to find all alone and unprotected the object of his search. Proceeding towards his pinnace, from which the party had disembarked during a calm, Standish, who was in advance of his followers, had heard voices through the thicket along which he was passing. With his usual caution and readiness, he had enjoined silence and secrecy upon his companions, and had crept, unperceived by the unsuspecting Morton, close to the spot from whence the voices issued. There, to his no small astonishment and gratification, he had suddenly beheld the well-known form of the sovereign of Merry-Mount, quietly conversing with the miserable, crack-brained outcast, the last remnant of Weston's ill-starred colony, upon trifling and indifferent matters. At a nod of their commander, his followers had noiselessly surrounded and captured their prize, as we have already seen, at the very moment when a jesting and contemptuous allusion to Captain Standish was falling from his lips.

Morton had stood gazing for a few moments in utter bewilderment at this sudden and unexpected apparition, but was slowly obliged to acknowledge that it was, indeed, no vision of his imagination.

"By Jupiter Diespiter," muttered he to himself, "this is the valorous Shrimp in *propria personâ*, and with a lobster's shell on his back, armed in proof, and making night hideous. I think

'tis no vision after all. Most valiant gentleman," continued he suddenly aloud, and addressing himself to his enemy, "would it be presumptuous to inquire whether you are in reality the illustrious Captain Miles Standish," (it did not seem at that moment natural to call him Captain Shrimp,) "or merely some fantastic apparition?"

"That my name is Standish," answered the person addressed, "is probably as well known to thyself as to me. That I am here in substantial flesh and blood, hath been sufficiently made known to thee already. Furthermore, I would request thee to spare me thy stale witticisms. We of Plymouth have but small relish for the buffoonery which is so rampant at Merry-Mount. And I would, moreover, advise thee to collect what reason thou mayest possess in that crazy brain of thine, that thou mayest be better prepared than at present thou seemest, to answer the interrogatories of the grave fathers of Plymouth."

"Truly, most valiant captain," answered the crest-fallen Morton, "I have not, at this present time and tide, the smallest intention to seek the society of those grave and respectable personages. Therefore, it would hardly seem necessary in me to prepare answers to any catechism with which it might be their desire to indulge me."

"But I tell thee," answered Standish, "that thou art to appear before them before the year is many days older, whether it be thy intention or inclination to visit them or no, for it is most assuredly my intention to escort thee thither, with as brief a delay as may be."

"This, then, is what I should term enforced hospitality," answered the other, "for which I shall be likely to render but little gratitude. You have basely and surreptitiously obtained command of my person, contrary to the laws of the English realm, under whose protection I presume that I dwell, even in this Ultima Thule, or, for thy better apprehension,

in this remote wilderness. The majesty of the law is not to be trifled with, Master Standish, and evil consequences may alight on the heads of those who dare to be guilty of so grave an offence. I warn thee to detain me at thy own peril."

"I am no pettifogger, Master Morton," answered Standish, "and I have neither ability nor inclination to argue legal points with thee. I am a soldier, and have quite skill enough to read and to understand my orders. Those orders are to assure myself of thy person at all hazards, and to bring thee presently to the plantation of New Plymouth, and those orders, look you, I purpose to execute."

"And by what authority, may it please your most arbitrary captainship," answered Morton, "do you dare thus to lay violent hands upon an unoffending subject of his Majesty, King Charles?"

"Truly, as I neither consider myself the prisoner in this instance," answered Standish, whose quick temper was already ruffled by the cool, complacent, and somewhat ironical demeanor of his captive, "nor thyself as the judge appointed to try the cause between us, I shall no longer brook thy insolence, and I counsel thee to imitate my discretion in this particular, and forthwith to hold thy peace."

"This little chimney is soon fired," quoth Morton to himself, "a taller one might quietly consume within itself these little sparks, but your little heroes are ever puffing and smoking. I pray thee, good Master Standish," continued he aloud in a more courteous and good-humored tone, "be not so easily inflamed by the natural resentment of a free denizen of the wilderness as well as a loyal subject of his Majesty, at losing his natural birthright of freedom, and, as he humbly conceives, without due cause. I did but purpose to try conclusions with thee upon this matter, surely it would be no extraordinary stretch of condescension upon thy part, to inform me a little touching the crimes with

which I stand charged, and the authority by which I am arrested."

"The squall will soon be upon us," said Standish, abruptly, to his followers, without heeding the last observation of his prisoner. "We shall hardly expedite our journey by taking to the pinnace to-night. Moreover, as the object of our expedition is already accomplished, and our journey considerably abridged by this fortunate encounter with the merry gentleman, whom we have come so far to seek, I propose to take up our quarters for the night at the ruined fort, whence, with the earliest dawn we will set sail for Plymouth."

The night had, in truth, advanced, as they stood parleying with the prisoner. The atmosphere, however, still retained its lurid glare and its suffocating stillness. The tempest, which was brooding in the distance, still delayed its coming.

The place where Morton had been captured, was in an open hollow, surrounded by wooded hills of moderate elevation, and not far from the mouth of the river which gave its name to the abandoned plantation. A difficult pathway, overgrown with brushwood, wound through the ravine, and led to an ancient clearing upon a more elevated plain, where a few scattered and dilapidated huts still stood, the last remnants of the unsuccessful settlement. Thither it was the intention of Captain Standish to conduct his prisoner, because, as he had already informed his companions, the threatening aspect of the weather rendered it advisable to postpone the voyage to the morrow.

Morton was accordingly accommodated with a rope, securely fastened about his loins, and placed in the immediate custody of two sturdy and grim-faced Puritans, who were expressly ordered to shoot him down, if he offered to make his escape. In this ignominious condition, the Lord of Merry-Mount was obliged to follow close upon the heels of the small hero whom he had so often derided, and who now led the way through the bushes, and along the

almost impenetrable pathway, with a firm and rapid step. Morton, whose confidence in himself had not deserted him, and who still nourished hopes of escape from the awkward dilemma in which he found himself, affected the most perfect submission, and followed patiently after his leader, slily testing the strength of the knot, however, as he advanced, and eagerly watching an opportunity to slip out of his noose, and to roll down the side of the hill, when he trusted easily to elude pursuit under cover of the almost impervious thickets. His hunting-knife, which was the only weapon he had with him, had unfortunately been taken from him at the moment of his capture, and he found the knot so securely tied, and the cord so obstinately tough, that all his efforts to loosen or break it proved fruitless. As they were passing, however, through a very deep shade, and along the edge of a somewhat precipitous ledge of granite, he suddenly gave the rope a furious jerk, and threw himself bodily over the sloping precipice. His manœuvre was only partially successful; his two sturdy guardians, who had wound the cord securely about their wrists, retained their hold upon him, although they were unable to maintain their balance, upon this sudden and unexpected strain. All three rolled headlong down the precipice, which might have been some twenty or thirty feet in descent, and plunged with a crashing noise into the thick underwood at the base of the rock. One of the matchlocks was harmlessly discharged in the catastrophe, and the three lay for a moment struggling together in the darkness and confusion. Standish, who was a few paces in advance, comprehended in an instant what had probably occurred, and sprang like a tiger down the cliff, in the direction whence came the confused noise of the struggle.

There was light enough remaining, to enable him to observe that the prisoner's attempt had been unsuccessful, and all the party being already upon their legs again, having sustained no

arther damage than a few scratches and bruises in their descent, ıe ordered them forthwith to make the prisoner's bonds still nore secure, and then to follow round the base of the ledge, till hey could ascend again to the narrow pathway which they had ost.

"So thou wouldst bid us farewell so soon," said he, in an ıngry tone, to his captive. "Trust me, thou knowest little with whom thou hast to deal, or thou wouldst desist from such trifling. I advise thee to follow at my heels quietly for the remainder of hy journey, or I shall send thee on a longer journey at a moment's warning, and one for which thou art even less prepared than for the present one. Be wiser, then, scapegoat; a further attempt will be fatal to thee."

"Scapegoat in thy teeth," muttered Morton, considerably vexed, and somewhat battered by the unsuccessful result of his attempt — "scapegoat in thy teeth, thou peppery, waspish, unmannerly drummer's boy! A plague upon it," continued he, in a louder tone, "'t is bad enough to be bruised in body, by an accidental plunge from yonder precipice, and truly there needs no browbeating in addition. I tell thee I was cast down from the rock against my will, even like the Tarpeian virgin of ancient story, and by the Lord, was I well nigh suffocated by the martial ornaments that were showered down along with me. Escape! and why, truly, should I care to escape? What crimes am I charged withal? '*Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus,*' et cetera, et cetera."

Muttering and discoursing in this fragmentary and voluble manner, Morton followed again his captors through the bushes, but finding his eloquence lost upon Standish, he soon relapsed into solemn silence.

No further opportunity for escape presenting itself during the remainder of their brief and rapid tramp through the woods, he

soon found himself emerging with his companions into the open plain which was to be the termination of their journey.

Though the night was already somewhat advanced, it was not so dark but that Morton could easily note the appearance and bearing of the different objects about him, with which he had long been familiar. There were at that moment, so far as he knew, no tenants in the dismantled and decayed huts which were here and there scattered along the clearing, but within the centre of the plain he knew that there was a larger tenement, which had been kept from time to time in tolerable repair, for the use of the trading and fishing parties who occasionally resorted thither. This was the building which had been designated by Standish as the ruined fort, because it had in truth served as a block-house or citadel in the early days of the settlement, although there was now only enough left of it to serve as a tolerable protection against the weather, and although it was never occupied, except temporarily and at distant intervals.

Hither, accordingly, the party bent their way, and soon entered the dilapidated tenement. It was a dismal looking edifice enough, although, for a summer's night, its dismantled and uncomfortable condition was hardly of consequence. The party would naturally have preferred bivouacking in the open air, as was their usual custom upon such expeditions, but as the night threatened to be stormy, and as they had a prisoner to guard, it was thought more advisable to take possession of this building.

The house consisted of two rooms, the larger opening directly from the door-way, and the second, which was smaller, communicating only with the first. There was an old oaken bedstead in the innner room, which had accidentally escaped destruction, and was the only piece of furniture in the whole mansion. There was a single narrow and unglazed window placed very near the ceiling of the larger room, and nearly the whole of the opposite side was occupied with an immense fire-place, which at

that season of the year was not likely to be used. It would have hardly dispensed much comfort, had the weather been colder, as the chimney itself had toppled down at some previous period, making a chasm in the roof, and leaving a large heap of bricks and rubbish scattered over the earthern floor. In this cheerful abode, the whole party were now assembled, and a light being soon struck, and two or three pine torches lighted, Morton was, much to his satisfaction, relieved of his bonds, and allowed to seat himself upon the ground along with the others. None of the party having taken any refreshment since the morning, and their appetites having been sharpened by their rugged march, they now produced their stores of dried bears' meat of which they invited Morton to partake. He, however, thought proper to decline their proffered hospitality, knowing that fasting would keep him watchful, and sat rather at a distance, amusing himself with observing at his leisure the appearance of his new companions.

The rude apartment, with its walls and roof formed of naked and smoke-stained rafters, the damp and earthy odor from the clayey floor, and the wild glare of the yellow torchlight, harmonized well with the grim figures who occupied that lonely dwelling. They had disencumbered themselves of their defensive armor, and were all seated in their buff jerkins upon the ground, seeming, with their closely shorn heads, stern features, grizzled beards, and rigid demeanor, about as formidable guardians and uncongenial companions to the merry Lord of Merry-Mount as he could possibly have desired. Their iron head-pieces, corslets and matchlocks were piled together in the centre of the apartment; the outer door was barred, and one of the soldiers sat with his back planted against it, while the others sat together in a circle. The one who seemed to be the oldest of the party now pronounced a long, enthusiastic prayer, in which a blessing was asked upon the food of which they were about to

partake; thanks were rendered for the signal success which had crowned their expedition, and fervent ejaculations of horror were added at the graceless condition of the profane sinner, whose misdeeds had at last provoked chastisement from the fleshly arm of authority. This preliminary concluded, the party proceeded to devour their food in solemn silence, and for many minutes no sound, save the steady crunching of their iron jaws, disturbed the quiet of the scene.

The lively spirit of Morton began to grow impatient at the imperturbable repose which pervaded the assembly. He had determined to fast that he might be more watchful, for he was resolved to make his escape during the night, if the slightest chance for doing so should offer itself. Being, however, of a sociable disposition, not being a whit abashed nor provoked by the very pointed allusions to his own unregenerated condition, contained in the somewhat lengthy exhortation of which he had been an auditor; feeling, moreover, his spirits recovering their buoyancy as he revolved in his mind a variety of projects for escape, and being, moreover, desirous to place himself upon better terms with his captors, that he might, if possible, disarm their vigilance and thus procure a greater chance of success for his efforts, he was sorry to observe the absolute and rigid silence maintained by the whole party.

"Truly a loquacious and cheerful company," muttered he impatiently to himself. "Madwags, all! Now, by Jupiter, I could even find it in my heart to request yon granite-faced fellow, who hath been prophesying so much to my discredit, to strike up the hundredth psalm, by way of enlivening the repast. Shade of Heliogabalus! is it not appalling to witness the steady grinding of provender between those ponderous jaws of theirs. Thank Heaven, they have some signs of grace, still, and I have still hopes of them. He who will moisten his clay a little, however hard baked and rigid it hath become, is not to be despaired of."

This last muttered ejaculation was elicited by observing that as the meal drew near its close, several of the party produced from their pouches certain round flasks, of comfortable dimensions, which they passed about among each other, occasionally diluting their potations with draughts of water, with which one of the iron head-pieces had been filled from a spring near the house. Morton was briefly invited to partake of this refreshment, and not to appear singular, and to avoid exciting suspicion, he complied, although he prudently refrained from doing more than moisten his lips. Pipes and tobacco were now produced, and upon the whole the party began to assume, in the eyes of Morton, a more favorable aspect. The silence was at last broken by the elderly person who had held forth before supper, and who, after Standish, seemed the most considerable person of the party.

"What thinkest thou, brother Standish, of the result of Isaac Allerton's recent voyage to England?" said he. "I have had small opportunity to confer with him since his late return, but methinks two hundred pounds at thirty per cent. is no such mighty negotiation."

"Truly I am, as thou well knowest," answered Standish, somewhat testily, — for he had, himself, not many years before, been sent upon a financial mission to England, the result of which, as the honest soldier was but little skilled in money matters, was the procurement of one hundred and fifty pounds, for the use of the colonies, at the moderate interest of fifty per cent. — "truly I am, as hath been sufficiently proven, but a child in mercantile matters, nor, if the truth were known, do I care to increase my skill, seeing that my profession and natural temper do but slightly fit me for such pursuits. I was born and bred a soldier, Master Neegoose, and am perhaps better fitted to deal with a bear or a Pokanoket savage than a money-changer, whom I take to be a more dangerous animal than either. As for Isaac

Allerton, truly I believe that what man could accomplish, he hath done. Thou well knowest, that early after our arrival at New Plymouth he accompanied me, alone, and of his own free will, to the abode of Massassoit, and I will say that it required no small amount of bravery on the part of one like Master Allerton, not bred to arms, thus voluntarily to venture, as it were, into the lion's mouth, for nothing was known, at that moment, of the temper and disposition of the red-skins."

"Most true, brother Standish," answered Neegoose, "I entertain no doubt of Master Isaac's courage, but even as thou hast thyself but just observed, other qualifications may be necessary to bring about a negotiation of lucre to a hopeful termination ——"

"Well, well, Master Neegoose," interrupted Standish, who was not much more of a logician than a financier, and who had no inclination to pursue the topic — "the negotiations of Master Allerton have doubtless been as successful as my own, and I have small cause to cavil at his proceedings. As for me, so far as concerneth my own agency in England, the colony would have suffered but little loss, had the Turkish corsair, which ran away with the ship which accompanied my own, even taken possession of my unworthy person also, or had the plague, which devoured forty thousand wretches in London during the year of my visit, even swallowed me likewise. So I say again, far be it from me to censure too severely the course of Isaac Allerton."

"Ah, brother Standish," answered Master Neegoose, "we well know the dangers both of flood and field, which threatened thee during thy voyage, and at London. Well do I remember the lamentations which were loud upon our tongues, when we heard of the fearful pestilence walking by noon-day, to which thy valuable life was exposed. Truly, most thankful were we to the Lord at thy escape, and most devoutly did we sing praises to the God of Jacob that he did deliver our blessed turtle-

dove from the multitude of dangers which compassed him around."

The small but truculent Miles Standish certainly bore little resemblance to a turtle-dove, but this happening to be the only scriptural quotation which the worthy Neegoose had on hand at the moment, he was obliged to content himself therewith. Having found, moreover, that his worthy captain was not particularly inclined to discuss and criticise the result of Master Allerton's embassy, which was at the moment the latest topic of interest at New Plymouth, he proceeded to discourse somewhat at length upon the probability of the same gentleman's being able to procure a patent from the company in England, for the territory which the colony then occupied without permission of the owners.

"I am no lawyer," answered Standish, after listening to a long and somewhat confused harangue upon this topic, from the worthy, but somewhat prosy Abraham Neegoose, "but I will venture to pronounce this opinion, that neither Master Allerton, nor any other agent of the colony, is likely to find a patent for our territory, unless he carry a golden key with him, to unlock the cabinet where they keep such matters in England. Small difficulty hath been found by Sir Henry Rosewell, Sir Richard Saltonstall, and other wealthy and influential knights and gentlemen of the Massachusetts colony, in procuring their patent, and the first ships are even now upon the way. But we of New Plymouth are weak and poor, and must even bide patiently for a season."

"Aye," answered Master Neegoose, "we are as yet but a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of a mountain, but the fruit thereof shall shake Lebanon. Still it may be that we shall be overshadowed by the new colonists who are speeding hither. 'T is a pleasant country the Massachusetts, and I could wish we had ourselves been seated there."

The comforting fluid had during this conversation been circulating decorously, but freely, and Morton, observing that the rigidity of the company had somewhat thawed, drew nearer, and appeared attentive to the conversation, by which he was apparently much edified. Thankfully accepting the flask which was again handed to him by one of the company, he raised it to his lips, and bowing politely to brother Neegoose, he remarked, —

"*Hunc scyphum tibi propino*, which in the vernacular," added he, upon observing the grim stare with which that respectable individual received this outlandish address, "is, I drink to your very good health, worthy Master Neegoose, and a pleasant ending to an acquaintance so auspiciously begun."

"Firstly," answered the worthy corporal Neegoose, for such was his rank in the little army of Plymouth, "firstly, I do hold the drinking of healths to be a profane and unnecessary invocation; secondly, I entertain doubts whether it be lawful for an unregenerate man even to pray in company with the elect, and I feel a conviction that it is unlawful for him to drink in their company; thirdly, thy whole character and proceedings are distasteful to me, and that thou mayest be sure I have small cause to affect thy society, know that the worthy and pious Faint-not Mellows, whom upon a recent occasion thou diddest so sorely maltreat, is brother unto my wife, and this being the case, thou mayest suppose that I, even I, am somewhat inclined to resent his wrongs."

"Whew ——" whistled Morton to himself, at this agreeable piece of information, "I have indeed treed the wrong bear, and had I possessed the smallest suspicion of thy distinguished matrimonial relationship, I would have seen thee damned ere I meddled with thy most grisly saintship. Master Neegoose," continued he aloud, "touching the third head of thy discourse, and waiving the two preceding as likely to lead us into longer argument than may be desirable at this time and

tide, I would even beg leave to inform thee that the worthy and pious Faint-not Mellowes, as you very properly term him, hath received no injury at hands of mine. True he was somewhat disconcerted at the rude gambols of certain waggish retainers of mine, but they meant no mischief, and I have checked and corrected them therefor, and they repent. This leads me once more respectfully to inquire," continued he, turning abruptly to Captain Standish, who, without paying much heed to the conversation between the prisoner and the corporal, was solacing himself with a quiet pipe of tobacco in a corner of the room, "why I have been tied thus by the loins like a monkey, and forcibly haled hither like a colt to a fair, in manner and form altogether derogatory to my dignity, and prejudicial to my comfort? In short, of what crime, or misdemeanor, am I accused, and by what authority am I thus deprived of my liberty?"

"By the authority of the Governor and Company of New Plymouth," answered Standish, drily, without taking his pipe from his mouth.

"I know no such governor nor any such company," returned the prisoner.

"Thou art likely soon to become better acquainted with them," answered the captain, "as I purpose to present thee to them within four and twenty hours."

"Aye," persisted Morton, "but the Governor and Company of New Plymouth have neither patent for the land which they themselves wrongfully occupy, nor royal charter for exercising jurisdiction in any part of New England, or any other portion of the universe. How dare they then intermeddle with a peaceful settler, far removed from their plantation, and forcibly deprive him of his liberty?"

"I am no pettifogger," answered Standish, "and meddle not with matters not pertaining to my profession. If thou art inclined to argument, my life for it, thou shalt hear reasoning

enow from the worthy magistrates themselves, therefore I counsel thee not to waste thy wisdom and thy wit upon me, but to reserve them till they be wanted."

"And I counsel thee," continued Morton, somewhat nettled at the cool and contemptuous manner of his captor, "and I counsel thee to think twice ere thou carriest out, to its consummation, the foul conspiracy in which thou art engaged."

"And I tell thee, Master Mischief-maker," answered Standish, "that I have seized thy body, because to that effect were the company's orders. If they had ordered me to bring thy head simply, I should have brought thy head, by which proceeding I should have been spared much trouble, besides the necessity of listening to thy tedious and irrelevant discourse."

"Here's an arbitrary giant," muttered Morton to himself, "here's a most hot-headed and hyperbolical Hop-of-my-thumb. A man's argument against his own kidnapping is tedious and irrelevant forsooth, and I suppose if the tiny little devil had his knife at my weasand, it would be an impertinent pleonasm upon my part to strike it away."

"Master Standish," continued he aloud, in a very lofty and dignified tone, "it is by no means my intention to quarrel personally with you. I do not purpose to undervalue your strength, your valor, nor even your geometrical height. I am aware that the renowned Wittewamutt, who derided the smallness of your stature, was himself made a head shorter for his insolence. I am aware that you brought home the savage chieftain's head in your breeches pocket, as a keepsake for those gentle employers of yours at New Plymouth. I am, however, well aware also of the motives of this violent assault upon my personal liberty."

"Then why, in the name of Satan," answered the doughty little hero testily, dashing his pipe upon the earth as he spoke, "then why, in the name of the foul fiend, hast thou asked me

so many questions about it? Being so wise thyself, methinks thou mightest have spared me the din of thy discourse. How much longer, I pray thee, will that damnable tongue of thine be wagging?"

Corporal Neegoose, and the rest of the company looked somewhat shocked at the irreverent expressions used by Miles Standish in the first ebullition of his wrath. Being, however, not altogether unused to such demonstrations upon the part of their commander, who was not famous either for moderation of temper, or for puritanic daintiness of language, they looked composedly on, as the choleric soldier strode up and down the small apartment, with his long sword clanking after him at every step, and vented his indignation in a few abrupt sentences.

"How long am I to be pestered with thy insolence?" said he. "Is it not enough that I must be troubled with thy entertainment and transportation to Plymouth, but thou must weary mine ears also with thy endless prating? How long, I demand again, wilt thou continue to wag that accursed tongue of thine?"

"In sooth," answered the imperturbable Morton, who rather enjoyed the ill humor of his antagonist,—"in sooth if I wag my tongue, Master Standish, 'tis because I have nothing else to wag. Stood we foot to foot together upon the outside of this dungeon where thou now holdest me cribbed and pent, and were I equipped with a blade as trusty as thine own, perhaps thou mightest find me apt to wag other weapons than my tongue."

At this magnificent effusion of heroism on the part of Morton who would, perhaps, have been somewhat disconcerted at being taken at his word, the wrath of the hot-tempered Standish became quite incontrollable.

"By heaven!" he shouted, as he turned upon his prisoner, like a tiger, "by heaven! I can hold no longer. This insolence shall be forthwith dealt with. Though the servant of the pious

and peaceable pilgrims, I am, perhaps, more of a soldier than a saint, and since thou demandest it, insolent braggart, thou shalt be indeed put to the proof."

As he uttered these words in a voice of thunder, still raging up and down the little room, he made a sudden dart at the pile of arms upon the centre of the floor, apparently with the intention of ferreting out a sword for the express behoof of the Lord of Merry-Mount.

That worthy looked a little uncomfortable, as he saw the effect produced by his last sarcasm, but was soon relieved from what might have proved an embarrassing position, by the worthy Neegoose, who now thought it necessary to interfere, to prevent this singular scene from being continued any farther.

"What ails thee? valiant brother Standish," said he advancing with great solemnity of voice and manner, and endeavoring to calm the impetuosity of Standish, who was pacing about with great vehemence — "'What ails ye, ye mountains, that ye skip like rams, and ye little hills, like lambs?' Why art thou so sorely vexed at the idle and vain buffoonery of him who is little better than as one of the wicked. Bethink thee of thy own position, of thine own character, and the dignity of the grave and reverend magistrates. Forego thy rash intention, and let not the child of Belial gain advantage over us. I pray thee conduct thyself rather like a calm and skilful commander than as a hot-brained man of wrath."

"Truly, Master Neegoose, I believe thou art right," answered Standish, whose wrath was beginning to cool again, almost as suddenly as it had waxed hot, as he reflected upon the absurdity of his proceeding, and upon the advantage which he should give his prisoner, by thus yielding to the dictates of his angry temper. "Truly, thou art right, and I am an ass, a peppery, uncomfortable blockhead, thus to be flouted of my humor by the taunts of a worthless vagabond." Thus rebuking himself as testily as

he had but just now abused his prisoner, the worthy champion of Plymouth seated himself, by a violent effort, plump upon the floor again, and lighting a fresh pipe, began to puff so furiously, that his head was soon enveloped in smoke, and the tempest of his wrath seemed for a time obscured and overcome by the clouds compelled from his pipe.

"Well, well," said Morton, taking up the thread of his discourse, when he saw that this sudden storm had subsided, and that the only danger at present to be apprehended from indulging his license of speech, was merely that the dialogue would prove a soliloquy — "well, as I before had the honor to observe, I know well the motives of this assault upon me. The plantation of Merry-Mount is a trifle too flourishing; the beaver trade is a trifle too successful. Ye of New Plymouth were but bears' whelps once, and I feared ye not; but ye have grown to be bears now, (and very gruff and uncomfortable bears ye are too,) and would eat up all the cakes and honey-combs to be found in Canaan. I know the cause of your high-handed proceedings, and I promise ye the star-chamber shall hear of it before I have done with ye ——."

"Cease, vain man, from thy idle and frivolous discourse," said Corporal Neegoose, who, observing that the commander of the party only silently puffed at his pipe with redoubled fury during the continuance of Morton's disjointed abjuration, thought it necessary to interpose to check the current of the prisoner's invective. "Let me assure thee, once for all, that thy conspiracies are all discovered, and it shall go hard but that the dissolute nest, which thou with vain-glorious folly dost denominate thy palace at Merry-Mount, shall be soon levelled to the ground. Crushed shall it be, even like a nest of hornets, and its idle and licentious brood of tenants scattered to the angry winds of heaven. 'Moab is my washpot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe, saith the Lord.' I tell thee, Merry-Mount,

which should be rather termed Mount Dagon, shall be destroyed, it and all that therein dwells. Aye, thou Master of Misrule, even so hath it been ordained."

"You have spoken," Corporal Neegoose, answered Morton, "but whether wisely or not, let the night-owl, whom I hear screeching just now, decide. As I find, however, that my conversation is so little relished, I will even address myself to sleep, and have accordingly the honor to wish rosy dreams and peaceful slumbers to ye all."

No one seemed inclined to oppose this resolution on the part of the prisoner, which, as the night was already well advanced, seemed on the contrary a very reasonable one. It was arranged by the commander that Morton should be placed for greater security in the inner room, and that Corporal Neegoose should occupy a part of the old bedstead with him, provided the prisoner should choose to avail himself of that luxurious piece of furniture.

The Lord of Merry-Mount accordingly took up his quarters in the interior apartment accompanied by the worthy corporal. The others, including the valiant captain, disposed themselves according to their pleasure upon the floor of the outer room, one of the party stretching himself for additional security across the outer door.

It was not long before a general concert of discordant and inharmonious sounds announced that the whole party were fast asleep, all save the prisoner, who, in his own langnage, describing the occurrence afterwards, was as wakeful as the geese of the capitol. He had, upon first lying down, affected great drowsiness, and had taken pains to fall very soundly asleep, in appearance, before the senses of the corporal were steeped in forgetfulness; so that the simple-minded functionary, who was especially charged with the safe-keeping of the prisoner, was completely disarmed of all suspicion, and resigned himself tran-

quilly to his slumbers almost as soon in reality as Morton had done in appearance.

Morton lay very quietly for nearly an hour. The night was already far advanced, and as the days were at the longest, it was not safe to delay his attempt at escape too long. Much to his surprise, the weather, so far as he could judge from the faint glimmering at the window in the other room, seemed tolerably clear. What had become of the storm which had worn so threatening an aspect in the afternoon, and which had been so alarming to the nerves of the subterranean philosopher of Wessaguscus, did not distinctly appear. Morton had lain there, reflecting upon a thousand different topics, listening to the discordant variety of nasal melody which proceeded from the outer room, and endeavoring to detect the particular organ of the heroic Standish amid the general concert, till it seemed to him that he had been lying there since the creation, or at least since the discovery of America, and he became at last so nervous and impatient that he felt the moment was come when he must absolutely arise and make the experiment, or else remain there the whole night through.

A peal of distant thunder now suddenly broke through the external silence and confirmed him in his intention. The storm was, after all, coming on, and a sharp squall, with thunder and lightning, would be sure to make such a pother about the crazy tenement that the party would be awakened and kept watchful for the remainder of the night. He determined to arise, but there were two difficulties which presented themselves at the outset. In the first place, the dreaming corporal, in the unconscious expansiveness of sleep, had wound his arms around Morton's neck, and it would be difficult to loosen his hold without awaking him. In the second place, if he was even fortunate enough to extricate himself successfully from this iron embrace, he had to make his way in the dark across the floor of the outer

room, which was, to a certain extent, paved with the upturned faces of his captors. Of course he dared not strike a light, and to make his way to the door, which, moreover, he knew to be barricaded with the body of one of the party, without awakening any one, seemed a very difficult task.

"Truly," muttered he to himself, "Master Corporal Neegoose, I could find it in my heart to dispense with these clinging arms of thine, which, however endearing they may be to the worthy good wife Neegoose, if such an enviable female exists, are, just now, most particularly in the way of your humble servant. By thy leave, then, most evangelical of corporals," continued he in an inaudible monotone, as he daintily and dexterously untwisted the hard knot in which the corporal had tied his bony arms about his neck, without awakening him, "by thy permission, I will even leave thee to thy chaste and solitary slumbers." Muttering thus, he groped his way stealthily from the bed as far as the entrance to the other room, when he paused for a moment upon the threshold, deliberating how he should proceed. It was so dark that he could only guide himself by the ear, and he was particularly anxious not to plant his foot upon the face of the sleeping Standish, feeling well assured that if that fiery hero should be awakened, he would, if necessary, stop his further progress with a brace of bullets, without the smallest hesitation. While he was thus taking counsel with himself, and wondering how he should be able to make his way to the outer door without having a more definite notion of the condition of the floor than he at that moment possessed, the scene was suddenly illuminated by a flash of lightning.

Morton readily took advantage of the circumstance and rapidly examined the appearance of the apartment. The single glance was almost sufficient to dash his hopes to the earth. The ground was covered with the prostrate forms of his captors, all of

them, however, wrapped in deep slumber, while the redoubtable leader of the expedition had established himself in a sitting posture against the door, flanked upon either side by a grim and substantial man-at-arms. As for the solitary window, it was so very small, besides being at such a distance from the ground, that there was not the slightest possibility of retreat in that direction.

"By Jupiter, these be stubborn impediments," muttered the Lord of Merry-Mount, to himself, as he stood in a contemplative and somewhat discomfited mood upon the threshold of the outer apartment. "Though this crazy old shell of a fort be not so strong as London Tower, yet it will do, after all, to hold in durance vile even as eminent a state criminal as the Prince of Passanogessit. Truly do I seem like a very reckless old rat who has allowed himself to be caught in a mouldy trap, but one which will hold him tightly in spite of his grimaces. I could take it as a particular and personal favor, now, if the earth would but open and swallow me up at once."

There appearing to be no immediate signs of any such catastrophe, Morton was obliged to bethink himself of some other means of relief. As the storm was evidently coming on apace, and as it was likely that the sleepers would soon be startled by the crash of the elements, he thought he might as well relinquish his efforts at escape, for the present at least, and he accordingly was about returning to the embraces of Corporal Neegoose, when another and still more vivid flash of lightning afforded him another opportunity of examining the scene of action. At the instant when the room was thus illuminated, his eyes happened to be turned towards the ceiling, in which, as will be remembered, a considerable rent had been made by the falling of the chimney. He had already rejected the idea of escape through that aperture, which, although it was larger than the window,

and in fact of sufficient dimensions to admit of the passage of his body with some little compression, was at so hopeless a height from the floor, as to be altogether out of his reach. At the moment when the lightning illuminated the gloom around him, his eyes were accidentally fixed upon the ceiling. Was he deceived by a too sanguine imagination, or did he really at that instant behold a means of unexpected and easy escape? Either a phantom of his brain was deluding his senses, or else he had seen a rope dangling from the roof, and reaching nearly to the floor. The flash was past, however, in the same instant, and all was darkness again.

"Fair and softly," said he to himself, as he stood pondering for a moment in the same position which he had retained since he left his couch, "fair and softly; yonder slender and waving line, which the lightning hath revealed to me, looked very like a good honest hempen rope, but it may after all be but the counterfeit presentiment, the phantasma of a rope. If it should prove but an airy picture, a fanciful figment of my heated brain, why truly I fear 't will be of foul augury. A rope, the ghost of a rope, faugh, this savors too strongly of a certain leafless tree which bears human fruit. Why, precisely at this moment, should the fantastic vision of a rope's end present itself? They lie in their throats, these slanderous Puritans, who seek again to crush me to the earth with their accusation of foul crimes in England, of which they know me innocent. They would send me home, would they, again to be badgered and worried by a pack of yelling curs? I know the mouths of the blood-thirsty hell-hounds are slavering at the thought that they are sending me home to a gibbet. But they lie in their throats, and ——."

As Morton muttered these exclamations with more earnestness and passion than was usual with him, there came another flash of lightning, which again revealed to him the appearance of the mysterious rope. Moving almost as quickly as the flash, and

dexterously avoiding, as he dashed forward, the upturned faces and prostrate forms of his captors, his hand had already securely clutched the rope before the darkness had again enveloped him. Giving it a desperate pull with all his might, to ascertain whether it was a real, substantial cord, capable of sustaining his weight and assisting him in his escape, or only a spiritual noose to entangle him in some new and indefinite embarrassment, he soon decided that it was indeed as honest and material a rope's end as was ever twisted. Without more ado, and waiting for no more illumination of any kind, he climbed rapidly and with uncommon agility to the roof, coiled himself through the narrow aperture like a serpent, and then crouched for a moment till another flash should show him the proper means of descending, without breaking limbs or neck. While he was thus hesitating, he heard a low, hoarse voice directly below him.

"Hist, hist, Master Morton," said the voice, "knowest thou me not?"

"Faith," answered Morton, "he must have good eyes that knoweth his oldest friend in such a pitchy atmosphere as this. Still, if I mistake not, thou shouldst be my subterranean philosopher of Wessaguscus, he who smelleth the thunder when it is brewing, even in the bowels of the earth."

"Thou diddest me a kindness once," said the voice.

"Exactly so," answered Morton. "I could have sworn it was thou. By Jupiter Diespiter, thou hast requited it a thousandfold, and if I reward not thy grateful heart, if fortune do but extricate me from my present dilemma, I wish I might be choked in the very rope which thy disinterested benevolence hath furnished me with. Verily, I have not found such gratitude, no, not in Israel. But, how shall I get down to thee, my fine fellow?"

"Feel for the hickory bough, Master Morton, it will bear thy [illegible]"

So instructed, Morton groped cautiously about, moving very gingerly along the crazy roof of the edifice, which, having been originally constructed for a fort, was unfortunately of a much greater elevation than most of the rude dwellings of that day. Feeling that a broken leg or a dislocated ankle would hardly expedite him in his nocturnal march, Morton conducted himself so warily, that it was long before he found, at the extremity of the building, a long hickory branch, extending almost to the roof-tree. Grasping it, as soon as it was found, and trusting implicitly to the counsels of his enigmatical friend, he swung himself boldly out into the darkness. The branch yielded gently with his weight, and he felt himself descending till he knew he must be very near the ground. When the branch would bend no more, he relinquished his hold, and dropped easily upon the ground.

As soon as he found himself fairly out of his prison, he cast a rapid and anxious glance around him. The darkness was not so intense as it had first appeared, or else there was something of the extraordinary and preternatural light returning, which had so strongly arrested his attention upon the previous evening. At any rate, the outlines of the landscape, the dusky figure of the dismantled fort, the dim and portentous forms of the gigantic trees, were visible, and he even fancied that he saw the faint and shadowy appearance of his mysterious friend creeping stealthily out from beneath the shadow of the hickory.

"Hillo, hillo, sweet philosopher," said he in a shrill whisper, "is that thine own worthy self, which I behold stealing from the bushes?"

"I am glad you have escaped from the mighty man of wrath," said the other, creeping close up to him; "pray Heaven, the plague be not let loose for this."

"Poh, poh, a fico for the plague," answered Morton, gaily; "and now listen to me, my good fellow. If I do not warmly

urge thee to accompany me this night to our poor palace of Merry-Mount, 'tis because I am somewhat out of suits with fortune, myself, just now, and because my patronage would be like to prove but a small blessing, seeing that although I have, by thy most opportune assistance, eluded the grasp of my pursuers this night, I may yet momentarily expect that the attack will be renewed upon me, even in my stronghold. Thou wilt return to thy subterranean receptacle, that is to say, thou wilt burrow in thy hole again this night, I suppose."

"I shall go back to my den," answered the other, shuddering, "but alas! Abamoko is fearful, my flesh will be torn with red-hot pincers. Did not I tell you that I smelt the thunder coming?"

"Well, no matter about Abamoko and his pincers just now," replied Morton; "I must be off, and that speedily, but before I go, let me say thus much. These matters will blow over ere long, at least I hope so, and then, if thou wilt but accept my offer, I promise thee a place of honor and profit at Merry-Mount, to be followed up by still more substantial favor, when certain projects, which the wise ones wot of, shall have ripened into fulfilment. In the mean time, and as an earnest of my good intentions, take this, my fine fellow. We have not yet discovered a gold mine at Passanogessit, nor hast thou, with all thy thunder-smelling propensities, discovered the philosopher's stone, or I am mistaken. Therefore, take these few poor pieces, and come to me when the storm is over. Good-night my good fellow, I have a longer tramp before me than thou hast, and the nights be short."

So saying, Morton slipped a few pieces of money, the only ones which he had with him, into his companion's hand. The philosopher received them mechanically, and stood stock-still for an instant. Suddenly, as he jingled the pieces, a thought seemed to electrify him. He uttered a shrill laugh, jumped high into the air, and clapped his hands in a paroxysm of

delight, quite extraordinary and wholly unwarranted by the circumstances.

"Ho, ho, ho," he cried; "ho, ho, ho, solid silver! crosses of solid silver. No more digging, no more pinching, no more hot irons. Ho, ho, ho! a fig for Abamoko!"

With this highly intelligible ebullition of triumph and gratitude, which was certainly not justified by the magnitude of the present which he received, the wild man again sprang high in the air, and then dashed off at full speed into the darkness. The shrill wizard laugh was wafted fitfully back from the gloom which had suddenly, as it were, ingulphed him, and was caught up by the echoing hills and reverberated through the mirky and savage silence, till it seemed to Morton as if a thousand invisible demons of the wilderness were mocking him in the darkness. Suddenly there was a stir in the fort. Morton, who had only advanced a few rods in the opposite direction from that in which his mysterious friend had disappeared, crouched under a tree, and strained his eyes anxiously through the darkness. There was a confused and noisy trampling in the house. Suddenly a light was struck. At the same instant, a gun was discharged at a little distance from the house, then another, and another. Then through the light, which streamed from the solitary window, Morton could distinctly perceive the forms of his late captors issuing from the house, and rushing madly with many confused and angry cries, in the direction of the fugitive. He had evidently been heard and seen in his moment of triumph, and had as plainly been mistaken for Morton himself. Shot after shot was fired, but without success, for, after the last discharge had died upon his ear, he still heard, above all other sounds, the ringing, wizard laugh, sounding more and more faintly in the distance, and repeated by the echoes in still more ghostlike and fantastic tones — Ho, ho, ho!

CHAPTER III.

THE HURRICANE.

This accidental diversion in Morton's favor was fortunate. The pursuers, having started off in the darkness upon a wrong scent, would hardly discover their mistake in time to molest him during the next few hours. He accordingly hoped to gain sufficient time to enable him to reach Merry-Mount and fortify himself there, before the enemy should besiege his stronghold. He was at that moment some eight or ten miles distant from his home, because it was necessary for him to go considerably about, to cross the head of the Monatoquit River, which separated the plantation of Wessaguscus from that of Passanogessit. He stood upon the edge of the plain, and was just starting upon his tramp through the forest, when his attention was arrested by the extraordinary appearance of the atmosphere.

We have already noticed the singular illumination of the heavens a little after sunset. This remarkable brilliancy had now returned at the dead of night, and a large portion of the upper sky was covered with yellowish vapor, which emitted a wild and sickly glare, contrasting strangely with the pitchy darkness which had for the last hour or two enveloped the scene. The thunder still rolled, and the lightning flashed at intervals, but not a drop of rain fell from the clouds, and it seemed as if the parched and arid earth had absorbed so much of the fierce sunshine which had prevailed for many days, that it repelled and dissipated the gathering moisture in the clouds.

Whether the storm had spent its fury in other directions, or whether it was still brooding and impending in the distance, seemed doubtful; but there was something in the calm and lurid atmosphere, something nameless and indefinable, which inspired sensations of awe. It was so death-like a calm, that not a single leaf quivered upon the poplars. The crackling of a dried twig, under Morton's foot, sounded like the report of a fire-arm. He still stood upon the plain which we have described, upon which grew here and there several gigantic oaks and chestnuts, and had advanced nearly to the edge of the forest which surrounded the clearing. He had paused, bewildered by the extraordinary light which had so suddenly returned. He was at first inclined to believe that the woods had taken fire, but there was neither smoke nor any other indication of such an event. Moreover, the total disappearance of the phenomenon for some hours, with its sudden and startling recurrence, both forbade the idea of a conflagration. Suddenly the breathless silence was broken by a distant, rushing sound, as if the air were swept by myriads of invisible wings. The volume of sound increased fearfully every second, and now the forest roared as if the ocean had burst its bounds, and were sweeping over the land. The unnatural light glared still more fitfully upon the scene, and as the hardy Morton looked with terrified eyes around, he saw the mighty wood fluttering, writhing and tossing its myriad arms madly for a moment. In that single moment, ten thousand trees were whirled from their roots, and dashed to the earth, before his eyes. There was a short, wild crash, as these forest giants, which had braved the storms of centuries, fell before the furious blast, and at the next instant, the whole forest bent flat to the earth, like a field of waving grass, as the hurricane careered over it in its majesty. The thunder-cloud, which had so long delayed its coming, now sailed up from its resting-place with fearful velocity, obscuring with its black wings the preternatural glare, and then

descended with sudden swoop upon the earth. The rain fell in floods, the inky blackness of the air was pierced incessantly by the arrowy lightning. The thunder crashed above and around in one unbroken roar. No breathless interval between the flash and the bolt, whispered of any slight removal of the dreadful artillery of heaven. The rattling thunder rode upon the lightning's wings. Peal followed flash, and flash succeeded peal, in ceaseless and fearful succession.

At the instant of the hurricane, Morton had thrown himself flat upon the earth. As he prostrated himself, he saw a solitary and gigantic chestnut tree, which stood near him upon the plain, flying through the air like a feather, its ponderous trunk snapped like a last year's reed. The next instant a thunderbolt shivered a mighty oak which stood by itself within ten yards of him, and during the breathless moments which succeeded, as he lay with his face upon the ground, the rain pouring like a cataract, it seemed as if the earth must be powerless to absorb the thunderbolts, which fell incessantly around him.

How long he lay in this condition, he knew not. The moments seemed ages, in that fearful convulsion of the elements; but the summer tempest was soon over. The hurricane was brief as it had been terrific, and it was soon extinguished, as it were, by the floods of rain, which were still falling.

In half an hour, the violence of the storm had abated. The lightning still glared, and the thunder rolled in the distance, but the clouds were broken, and a star or two glimmered faintly through the rifts of the tempest. Morton aroused himself at last from his recumbent position, and looked ruefully around. The storm had subsided, but the night was dark, and his journey was likely to be obstructed by the multitudes of fallen trees.

"Well, well," said he to himself, "the elemental pother is over, and, as far as I can judge, am I neither blown into the sea,

nor blasted by lightning, nor ignobly drowned in a puddle, which seemed latterly most like to be my fate.

'Jupiter Diespiter!
Igni corusco nubila dividens!'

Ah Flaccus, Flaccus! what boots it that I strive to soothe my ear with the limpid gurgling of thy verse, when the howling hurricane and the wrathful Shrimp, both raging through the gloomy forests, have filled my soul with discord? Farewell, Flaccus, for the present, and farewell, ye bowers of Wessaguscus!" With this the undaunted Morton set forth resolutely upon his journey. The atmosphere grew lighter as he advanced, and revealed to him the ravages of the tempest. Vast trunks of prostrate trees, upturned roots, and ponderous, broken, interwoven branches, obstructed his passage at every step. Still on he toiled manfully and patiently. In an hour and a half he had emerged from the forest, and found himself engaged in passing a vast and gloomy swamp. The earth quaked beneath his feet as he struggled on, springing from one tufted hammock to another, and in danger every moment of being swallowed up in the black, yielding ooze, whose treacherous nature had been aggravated by the deluge of rain which had been falling. Still, with the adroitness and knowledge of woodcraft which he possessed, he was enabled to escape from this, as well as from the other dangers which beset his course. He reached the sources of the Monatoquit. As he had anticipated, the slender stream was swollen into a torrent, but he found, to his gratification, that a large tree had been torn up by its roots in the whirlwind, and thrown directly across the boiling flood. Across this natural bridge he nimbly made his way, and again dashed into the forest. On he sped, the distant lightning ever and anon flashing across and illuminating his path, and assisting him in threading his difficult passage through the tangled and tempest-riven woods. Day was

already faintly glimmering in the east, as the exhausted Morton at last reached the outer barricade of Merry-Mount. The gate was heavily and carefully barred; but the faithful Bootefish, attentive to his master's signal, although, of course, as drunk as usual, hastened to admit him. Morton ordered him to make all secure against an impending attack, and to awaken him in two hours. He then plunged into the palace, threw himself, all smoking and reeking as he was, upon a bear-skin, and fell instantly into a profound slumber.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SIEGE OF MERRY-MOUNT.

The only inhabitants of Merry-Mount, at that moment, were Bootefish and the Canary Bird. The other retainers and vagabonds, who composed its ordinary population, had gone up into the interior of the country, to trade with the Indians, and to supply themselves with beaver. As for Henry Maudsley, he had some time before become disgusted with the ribaldry which prevailed at the palace, and had abandoned entirely the temporary residence which he had established there. Although, as we shall have soon occasion to narrate, he still lingered in New England; there had been for some time very little sympathy or communication between him and the Lord of Merry-Mount.

Bootefish bustled about, during the brief slumber of his chief, with a good deal of importance and alacrity, making prompt and efficient provision for the approaching siege. There was a goodly store of matchlocks, and plenty of ammunition in the palace, which he now was busily employed in arranging, feebly assisted by the Canary Bird, who seemed that morning to have grown considerably more yellow of hue, at the same time that he had lost a good deal of the blithe and chirping vivacity which usually distinguished him.

There were three small apertures in the outward palisade, which inclosed the buildings at Merry-Mount, which had been intended for three murtherers or small cannon, which had never been mounted, but which Bootefish knew to be lying somewhere about the precincts. After considerable delay, he at last was fortunate enough to find them, and, with great exertion,

succeeded, with the aid of Doryfall, in placing them in their destined position.

The responsibility, which had been cast upon him, had for the moment dissipated the drunkenness of the heroic chief butler, and, as is usual with all truly great men, his genius seemed to rise in proportion to the emergencies of his situation. He never seemed more calm and self-collected than in this hour, so big with the destinies of Merry-Mount.

"Here be twelve good snaphances, Master Canary Bird," said he, complacently, addressing his lieutenant, and not observing the very rueful expression of the little man's face, "twelve snaphances, three murtherers, and one hundred pounds of good dry powder, besides a goodly heap of bullets of all sizes. By the beard of my father, methinks 't is enough to blow these bloody Puritans sky high; confusion upon the damnable croppies, Bernaby! Here, pledge me the same."

"Confusion to the croppies," gasped Bernaby, after swallowing eagerly a mighty draught of the potent liquid offered to him, with the desperate intention of inflaming his courage, which was growing rapidly torpid — "confusion to the croppies, Robin Bootefish! Marry and amen."

"Right, Bernaby! — but I wish thou wouldst get a little color in those parchment cheeks of thine. Look at me, man! Seest thou aught of the lily in my countenance?" cried the worthy butler, turning full upon his companion a face like the rising sun of midsummer.

"Truly, no, good Robin, and I could wish there were twenty like thee at Merry-Mount. Alas! we be, after all, but three. An' we had swashing Numps Rednape now, or Dick Shorthose, or even Peter Cakebread, with his damnably ugly face, methinks 't would be more comforting. Besides, 't is a pity that we two should gain all the glory of a triumph over Captain Standish. Is it not so, Master Butler?"

"Fire and fagots, no!" roared Bootefish, "we two, led on by the worthy Lord of Merry-Mount, are enough to toss an army of psalm-singers into the sea. Humphrey Rednape be damned, for a brawling, blustering bully; as for Peter Cakebread, I had rather than forty shillings that he were here, that thine own cowardice might be fairly scared out of thee, as thou witnessed the scurvy shifts which the old baboon would be put to, to escape the dangers which might beset him. But by the Lord! while I am talking thus the moments are passing. 'T is time to call the master."

"Quite time, I should say, worthy Robin," said the gay voice of Morton, who suddenly joined them, looking as fresh and jovial as ever, having found time, since arousing himself from his brief slumber to exchange his soiled and way-worn habiliments, and to array himself, as he said, in becoming costume to greet the distinguished visitor whom he was expecting — "Quite time, I assure thee, Robin, but, luckily, I do not depend upon the larum of thy tongue, to tell me when to rise when danger is nigh. I see thou hast completed thy preparations, for I have already been the rounds, and I commend thee therefor. I do not so highly commend thy present employment. 'T is not now the '*tempus dapibus*.' The sun is half an hour high, and thou must even defer the rest of thy potations, till we meet when all is over to pour out our libations upon the altar of victory. For the present, sobriety and decorum are most befitting."

"And prithee, your worship, how knowest thou of the approach of Captain Standish? How knowest thou whether he be not even now at New Plymouth?" asked the butler.

"From the very best authority, worthy Master Robin," answered Morton, "I feel quite sure that Captain Miles Standish hath already left New Plymouth, and is even now upon his way to invade Thomas Morton of Merry-Mount."

"And prithee, if I might ask, for there have been many idle

rumors floating about this expedition of late — prithee, who hath told thee this?"

"No less a person, honest Robin, than the aforesaid Captain Miles Standish himself," answered Morton.

"Captain Miles Standish! echoed the honest butler, perfectly astounded at this piece of intelligence, which his sovereign so flippantly conveyed to him — Captain Miles Standish! — and how, I pray thee, good Master, in the name of Satan, hast thou happened in his company, and how ——"

"And how in the name of Beelzebub have I happened out of his company when once in it? thou wouldst say," interrupted Morton. "'T is a long story, and must be reserved in all its details to some more quiet opportunity. Suffice for the moment that the heroic Shrimp circumvented me by stratagem at Wessaguscus."

"And how, I prithee, didst thou so wittily circumvent *him*?" cried Bootefish.

"I tell thee thou shalt know all in good time, Robin," answered Morton; "but let it suffice thee now, that I have reached my palace in safety. But in faith, thou shouldst have seen them butting their heads against each other in the dark, like drunken rams, and outbellowing the thunder in their rage, when they found their prisoner gone. As for the heroic Shrimp, trust me, he tore his leather jerkin for spite, and Corporal Neegoose, even the venerable Abraham, in whose bosom I had slept, would have torn the very hair from his head for vexation, had it not been too short to lay hold of.* But no more of this. To the look-out, Bernaby, and tell me what thou seest."

At this moment there was a loud knocking at the outer gate. Bootefish, at a nod from his master, advanced to the palisades, and reconnoitred the supposed enemy through a narrow lookout.

* See Note VI.

"'T is a red-skin," said Bootefish, returning to his master.

"A red-skin! then by my life 't is no enemy, I'll be sworn," exclaimed Morton. "To him again, Robin, and learn his errand."

Bootefish again advanced to the palisade, held a short parley with the savage, which was inaudible to the others, and then, after the lapse of a few minutes, returned to his sovereign.

"'T is a red-skin from Wessaguscus," said he, "and one who wishes well to the Master of Merry-Mount. He hath been informed by a white man, who sojourneth in that neighborhood, that Captain Miles Standish is even now upon his way to Merry-Mount, having set sail with his followers in his pinnace after the tempest of last night had abated. Fortunately, the wind hath been wondrous light, or the mighty man would have been here before the friendly scout."

"Admit the scout, Robin, he will be one more man-at-arms for our feeble garrison," said Morton.

"Truly your worship," answered Bootefish, "he utterly declined all invitation to that effect, although it was warmly extended to him by your unworthy precentor. He had promised to deliver the message sent by the white man of Wessaguscus, and having accomplished his errand, he hath vanished into the bushes.

"My life for it, this is another friendly office on the part of my subterranean philosopher. But thou knowest not my gem of sages," said Morton, "the solitary subterranean of Wessaguscus, who———"

"Sail, ho!" cried the Canary Bird from his perch.

"The devil!" ejaculated Morton, suddenly interrupting himself and mounting with wonderful rapidity to the lookout, in order to survey the scene for himself.

After straining his eyes for a few seconds into the clear blue distance, he became convinced that the white sail which was

first visible upon the edge of the horizon could be nothing else than the pinnace of Standish.

"Truly, the Philistines be upon us," cried he to Bootefish, "and the tug of war approacheth. Look again to the barricades and see that the murtherers are in fit condition to do their duty. We shall have warmer work than hath been often seen at Merry-Mount."

"'T is all in readiness, your worship," hiccupped the butler, whom matutinal potations, added to the excitement of his preparations, had now rendered magnificently drunk. "All is in readiness to receive the damnable brawlers of New Plymouth. Down with the profane despisers of our holy liturgy! Down with the bloody separatists! All is ready for them, your honor."

"All right, Robin," said the sovereign, descending from his watch-tower and setting himself busily to work to examine the arms and ammunition of the little fortress; "all very right, but I wish thou wert not always so cursedly drunk when thy sobriety would be worth its weight in gold to thy master. What a piece of ill luck it is, too, that my garrison should be so feeble just at this moment ——"

"We are enough, your worship," roared Bootefish; "enough and more than enough to swallow every one of the rascals. I pledge myself, I, Robin Bootefish, precentor and clerk of Merry-Mount, pledge myself to chop them all into mince-meat, and stuff sausages with them for your worship's breakfast. Confusion to the drunken Puritans, your honor, and ——"

"Tush, Robin," interrupted Morton. "I like thy spirit, but I cannot commend this braggadocio of thine. And, by the way, what hath become of your other man-at-arms, the stalwart Canary Bird? Go seek him out, Robin, for 't is time to muster our garrison."

"Certainly, certainly," hiccupped the butler. "'T is proper that the garrison should be mustered. But your worship should

know that this Canary Bird is a drunken knave, and what is more, a scurvy coward. I will look for him, your worship, but I pledge myself that I shall find him creeping into a rat-hole, or the bung of an empty ale-butt, to escape the ——— "

"So saying, the valiant butler staggered off, and after an absence of a few minutes, returned, leading along, by the ear, the recreant Doryfall, who, as he had rightly conjectured, had been found stowed away in the cellar among the empty casks.

"Here be the Canary Bird, your worship," cried Bootefish, "marvellously ill of the pip I assure ye, and ready to moult all his feathers, white as well as yellow. Here, my good fellow," he continued, extending his flask to the trembling Canary Bird, "take another drop. Why, thou lily-livered, ague-shaking mountebank, what ails thee, then, that thou swallowest not thy liquor?"

"'T is nothing," murmured the unlucky Canary Bird, in a feeble voice, and utterly unable to swallow the proffered libation. "I have a slight touch of the lockjaw. My aunt was a martyr to it."

"Your worship sees," said Bootefish, turning away from the cowardly Canary Bird with an expression of profound disgust upon his countenance, "your worship sees that there is no dependence to be placed upon this creature. Put not your trust in Canary Birds, saith the wise man. No matter, your worship, we two are enough to carbanado all the Puritans of Plymouth. I pledge myself, your worship ——— "

"Enough of thy pledges, honest Robin," interrupted Morton, "and do me the kindness to ascend once more to the lookout, for I believe that our unfortunate friend here might as well return to the cellarage; he is not even fit to serve as a warder. Go to the lookout, and that instantly. Death and damnation!" he continued, as the drunken butler, after pompously staggering towards the ladder which led to the lookout, fairly rolled over

upon the ground, as he attempted to ascend. "By Jupiter Diespiter! here is my garrison reduced to myself. Why, Bootefish, thou drunken lobster, art thou really deserting me in my utmost need? Why, thou miserable, pot valiant, human hogshead, thou ———"

"Fair and softly, fair and softly," hiccupped the butler, as he slowly assumed a sitting posture at the foot of the ladder. "Fair and softly, your worship. Good words are due to the future bishop of Massachusetts. Ceremony is a proper thing, even from a sovereign to his subjects. I was born to be an usher, a genteel usher. Your worship shall see the genteel ceremony with which I will receive the bloody-minded Puritans. Down with the accursed Brownists! Cherish piety — piety and ceremony. A curse upon all Canary Birds, and a fig for Miles Standish." With these disjointed ejaculations, the heroic Bootefish fell into a profound lethargy.

Morton, stepping lighly over his prostrate carcase, now hastily ascended his watch-tower. As he reached the summit, he saw that the pinnace of Miles Standish had already cast anchor under the cliff, and that the party who had captured him the night before were disembarking upon the beach.

"By the Lord," cried he to Doryfall, who still stood the image of mute dismay near the base of the tower — "by the Lord, the invincible armada hath arrived at last. By Jupiter, the odds are something heavy, nine to one as I count them, for of my garrison of two, one is drunk with fear and the other with liquor. O, thou heroic and most truculent of Puritan captains, am I to fall into thy hands after all? O, Miles, Miles! thou lengthy brevity, thou gigantic pigmy, thou confounder of dimensions! O, thou, who art Miles in name, leagues in valor, and but a few paltry inches in stature, why the plague could not the plague have swallowed thee in England, when thou didst so manfully brave its fury, and why, O why did it spare thee to plague me here with thy fury, in New England?"

As Morton thus soliloquized, the invading party had all disembarked upon the beach, where they remained stationary, and seemed to be listening to the orders of their commander.

"There they are, every one of them. I can see them all — the captain, the centurion, the corporal, Standish, Abraham Neegoose, and all the rest of them. '*Antimachumque, Helimumque, Securiferumque, Pyracmon.*' O, Miles! why could not the ferocious Pecksuot have sent an arrow through thy jerkin? So should I have been saved the trouble, and the whole of New England the expense, of this tremendous invasion."

Morton's soliloquy was now cut short. The party upon the beach began to move, and the sovereign of Merry-Mount hastily descended from his elevated position, to prepare for their reception. He was now, unfortunately, in solitary grandeur, for the Canary Bird had taken advantage of his master's temporary abstraction to again effect his escape into some unknown hiding-place, and the butler being in a hopelessly lethargic condition, there was none left but himself to defend his castle.

Morton now took one more hasty survey of his artillery and ammunition, and then arming himself with a snaphance, he stationed himself at one of the little apertures which had been left in the palisade, and reconnoitred the enemy as they advanced.

In a few minutes, the whole party, with their commander at their head, had arrived within fifty yards of the palisade.

Morton now hesitated as to the course which he was to pursue. If he had not been entirely alone, if only two or three faithful followers had been at his side, it would have been perfectly easy for him to have defended his castle against the present invasion. It was now, however, evident that the palisade was to be attacked upon two or three points at once, for he already observed that three of the party were detailed in an opposite direction. It would have been easy for him, as he

stood there at the embrasure, to have taken deliberate aim at Standish, and have picked him off at the head of his company. It would have been easy for him to have fired one raking shot with the murtherer, which would have inflicted serious damage, although the nature of the ground, and the clumsiness of his field-pieces, rendered the result of such a cannonade very doubtful. At all events, it was not likely that he could destroy the whole of his assailants with his single arm, nor defend his place against a desperate attack for any considerable length of time. Had the Canary Bird but been a little less chicken-hearted, or the butler a little more abstemious, it would have been possible for him, perhaps, to have beaten off his assailants, but alone as he was, the attempt seemed almost hopeless. His palisades were weak and easily broken through, and it was entirely out of his power to defend them at more than one point at a time. Moreover, if his adversaries should become inflamed by obstinate resistance upon his part, the terms of his final surrender, — and to that under the circumstances he felt that he must come at last, — would be more disadvantageous, particularly if any of them should suffer loss of life or limb in the attack, than perhaps might now be secured by diplomacy.

While Morton was thus holding council with himself, the valiant Standish had advanced still nearer to the palisade. At that moment the life of the Plymouth hero hung by a hair. Morton covered him deliberately with his piece, the barrel of which he thrust through the embrasure, and for an instant's space, he was inclined to yield to the promptings of the busy devil within him. After all, it would have been but an act of self-defence. The invaders of his domicile were attacking him without the slightest shadow of legitimate authority derived from any source under heavens. The principles of natural law, all authorized him to defend himself and his castle by every means in his power. At the same time there was

something in the manly bearing of Standish, that forcibly appealed to the generous part of Morton's nature. Small was the love which the Lord of Merry-Mount bore to the champion of the Puritans, and still his soul revolted at the thought of slaying the gallant soldier like a dog in a ditch. And yet he had himself, within the last fifteen hours, suffered insult, reproach, ignominy, at that gallant soldier's hands. He had been treated like a base cur, bound, handcuffed, outraged, degraded, and all this he felt without cause, and without right, except the right of brutal violence. The man who had most vilified, persecuted, and insulted him, by whom he had been entrapped in the forest, caged, tormented, and, after his escape, hunted down to his lair as if he had been a wolf, that man stood now within a few yards of the muzzle of his gun. A motion of his finger, and the vanquisher of Wittewamutt, the heroic champion of the Puritans, the terror of all the savage tenants of New England, was sent to his long account.

All these conflicting thoughts rushed rapidly through Morton's brain. Generosity united with prudence finally triumphed over the desire of vengeance. His character was more politic than desperate; and as he reflected how infinitely complicated and disastrous would be his relations with the settlers, should his hands be stained with the blood of Standish, even if, as was most unlikely, his grim companions in arms should leave his death unrevenged a single hour, he relinquished his first and deadly purpose.

During the infinitely small fragment of time, during which his life had been thus rapidly but minutely weighed in the balance of Morton's mind, Miles Standish had advanced very near to the palisade, closely followed by Corporal Neegoose and four of the men-at-arms.

"Thomas Morton," he cried at last, "by authority of powers committed to me by all the planters of New England combined,

I summon thee presently to surrender thyself, without further delay, into my hands."

"Faith," answered Morton from the embrasure, "the courtesy I have so recently experienced at thy hands, when my evil genius led me unwittingly into thy clutches, hath inspired me with small relish for a further continuance of thy acquaintance. Retire, Captain Standish, or I shall most assuredly do thee to death where thou standest. '*Verbum sapienti*' — thou knowest the proverb. Retire, or I will knock thee down like a moose."

"Fire, if thou darest," replied Standish, without blenching, although the muzzle of Morton's matchlock still pointed full at his breast; "fire, if thou darest, my death will avail thee nothing. If thou wouldst have another murder upon thy guilty hands, do as thou threatenest."

"'T is a calumnious lie," shouted Morton, stung by this insult into renewed passion. "I marvel much, that a gentleman and soldier, like thyself, Captain Standish, can stoop so low as not only to wear the livery and obey the commands, but even to repeat the falsehoods of these base-born curs. But I will not be fretted out of my reason, and moreover ——"

"Master Morton," interrupted Standish, in a peremptory tone, "this parley hath lasted till I am weary. In one word, wilt thou surrender at discretion, or shall I use violence? Choose, and that instantly, for I swear to thee by the God of Jacob, that my orders shall be executed without a moment's further delay."

Morton was a prudent and politic man. During the interval which had elapsed since the first arrival of the pinnace, sufficient opportunity had been afforded him for reflection upon his position. Even when giving way to an explosion of passion, his reason was by no means clouded, but he had the wit to preserve a method, even in his rage. He had been, throughout the whole interview with Standish, collected, if not cool. He had re-

flected upon all the probable consequences of his action, even while his matchlock pointed at the heart of Standish; he had reflected, during the brief parley, upon his future prospects, even while apparently yielding to a tempest of passion, and he had at last arrived at the conclusion, that all the golden visions which had solaced his exile, and to convert which into reality had been the cherished object of years, must inevitably be dispelled, did he not extricate himself skilfully from the dilemma in which he found himself. He was sure, at all events, to fall into the hands of his enemies, for to resist single-handed the present invasion, was but fool-hardy. It was only the part of a desperate man to sell his life dearly, and to defend himself to the last. His situation was not yet desperate, but with the blood of Standish, or that of any of his followers, upon his hands, it would be utterly hopeless. On the other hand, if he surrendered himself into the hands of Standish, the worst result which he anticipated was a voyage to England. Under the present complication of circumstances, he felt that more was to be gained than lost by such an event. There was much in the recent history of his affairs that might be handled by him with advantage, to circumvent the projects of the new planters of New England. An immediate interview with Sir Ferdinando Gorges would be of service at the present juncture, in forwarding the enterprise of Sir Christopher Gardiner, upon the success of which depended the fulfilment of his own schemes.

Revolving these matters rapidly in his mind, and giving one despairing glance at the motionless carcase of the chief butler, he at last resolved to surrender. Within less than one minute after Standish had uttered his last peremptory demand, Morton called to him, through the embrasure, in a voice which had resumed all its native gaiety, —

"As the result of the present parley, the garrison of this fortress is disposed to capitulate. The general of the besieging forces will please to propose his terms."

"Master Morton," replied Captain Standish, "I have neither time nor taste for buffoonery. Thou wilt forthwith unbar thy gate, or I shall give my signal at once for an attack."

"The garrison," continued Morton, with much magnificence of manner, "the garrison, to save the effusion of blood, and to preserve many valuable lives, doth consent to capitulate; but it demands to go forth with all the honors of war."

"With the honors of a halter," roared the choleric Standish, nettled by Morton's effrontery. "Unbar the gates instantly, or I swear to thee by ——"

"Swear not at all, most waspish of warriors," interrupted Morton, "for lo, am I not already obeying the behests of the cruel conqueror? Surely, it is legitimate for the commander of the garrison, in the present state of the siege, to whisper a word or two touching the terms of his surrender. I require, therefore, a pledge from the besieging general, that no violence shall be offered to me, or to any of my garrison; and that, furthermore, my flag shall be saluted by my garrison, after it is struck. Do you assent to these conditions?"

"Corporal Neegoose," shouted Standish, in a tempest of rage, "I delay no longer." At the word of command, the corporal and the men-at-arms rushed after their commander, in a furious assault upon the gate; while, at the same instant, at a concerted signal, the party upon the opposite side were already about to attempt a breach in the palisade with their partisans. At the instant of the attack, Morton quietly and slowly unbarred the portal, saying, as he did so, —

"Fairly and softly, my masters, fairly and softly. Silence giveth consent, saith the proverb, and thus do I understand my terms to be allowed. Be not over hasty, most valiant general, nor thou, most evangelical of corporals; but enter calmly, and take possession of this virgin fortress."

The gate swung open as he concluded, and displayed Morton,

standing quite alone at the entrance to his domain, with his matchlock in his hand. The party, headed by Standish, rushed furiously into the inclosure, and, suspecting some ambush, as they found Morton, whom they supposed surrounded by twenty followers, in such perfect solitude, Corporal Neegoose and two others made a sudden onset upon him, threw him to the ground, disarmed and bound him, and were upon the point of handcuffing and gagging him, when Standish interposed, and ordered them to desist.

"Master Morton," said he, "you are my prisoner; but from your recent behavior, I am inclined to believe you satisfied that it is useless to resist. I am, therefore, disposed to liberate you from actual bondage, assuring you, however, that any attempt at rescue, on the part of your followers, will be punished by instant death."

"Captain Standish," replied Morton, after he had shaken himself free, "'t would have been perchance more becoming to have treated me less like a felon, and more like a gentleman, after I had thus surrendered at discretion. Yet I do hereby volunteer my parole, assuring thee that it is neither my intention nor inclination to attempt my escape. I shall follow thee to Plymouth as patiently as the wild ass's colt followeth its dam. Touching the mattter of a rescue upon the part of my followers, thou wilt believe that to be most unlikely, seeing that with the exception of one chicken-hearted monkey, whom thou wilt find, either dead or alive in some cranny in the cellarage, yonder motionless lump of humanity constituteth my whole garrison."

As he concluded, Morton pointed to the prostrate Bootefish, whom several of the followers of Standish had just discovered, tranquilly enjoying his slumbers at the foot of the lookout, and whom they now were dragging forward for the inspection of their commander.

As he listened to the last observation of Morton, and contem-

plated the lethargic form of Bootefish, Standish looked at his corporal with a somewhat disconcerted expression of countenance. To the hero of New Plymouth, his present achievement seemed not likely to bring fresh laurels. Giving one contemptuous glance at the butler, the testy Standish turned his back upon Morton, and striding towards the farther extremity of the inclosure, seated himself upon a log, struck a light, and began to solace himself with a pipe of tobacco. In the meantime, Morton, throwing himself into a gracefully recumbent attitude upon the turf, and looking benignantly around upon his captors, observed, —

"Make yourselves perfectly at home at this poor palace of ours, my masters. All is yours, I fear me, by the rights of war. I cannot flatter ye that ye have broken down my spirit yet, although ye have conquered my territory, —

——— 'Et cuncta terrarum subacta
Præter atrocem animum Catonis.'

Hast ever solaced thyself, Master Neegoose, with the crystal numbers of the Venusian bard?"

CHAPTER V.

THE DOUBLE LABYRINTH.

Several weeks had elapsed since the matters just related, when one afternoon Esther Ludlow was wandering in the neighborhood of her residence. Summer had long been scorching the wilderness. After a day of breathless heat and cloudless sunshine, she had come forth from her humble cottage as the afternoon was closing, to watch for the coming of the evening wind. But the leaves stirred not yet, but hung shrivelled and motionless in the brazen sky. The oppressiveness of the atmosphere was so excessive, that even the sounds of nature seemed languid and feeble. The melancholy cat-bird in the deepest thicket scarce could utter his musical complaint; the squirrel sat motionless upon his tree; the snake lay basking upon the rock. All was silent, save the ceaseless hum of the locusts, whose shrill and all-pervading monotone, struck upon the ear like the audible voice of heat. The great heart of nature seemed to beat feebly in her bosom. Esther lingered in the cloistered depths of the forest, now gliding with the noiseless movements of a nun, through the long, green naves, now gazing upwards at the vast and solemn arches; now losing herself among the clustering and interlacing ranks of gigantic and aspiring shafts, or watching, as she sat upon some prostrate column, the play of the chequered sunbeams, as they streamed in a horizontal flood through the branched and foliaged tracery of the grove.

Long and deeply she mused. At times she doubted whether, in her conduct during the last few months, she might not have committed some irretrievable error, but no tongue had whispered

Maudsley's name, since the memorable interview in which he had bidden her farewell forever; and whether he still lingered in New England, or whether he had already departed to more genial scenes, she could not tell. At times, something whispered in her heart, that her bearing towards him had been too harsh, and that she had not dwelt kindly enough upon the constancy of his love. But she reflected that constancy and devotion could not atone for suspicion and insult. She became every day strengthened in the sad conviction, that fate had allowed two hearts for a brief period, and almost in their own despite, to cleave and grow to each other, only to be rudely and forever torn asunder, and to shed their life-blood in the separation. She felt convinced that there was an utter want of sympathy between their natures, and that a reconciliation was hopeless. What the mystery of the chain betokened she could not imagine; the idea of Sir Christopher Gardiner as a lover had never presented itself to her mind. She had not the slightest idea in what way Maudsley had possessed himself of the chain, and an indefinable feeling had restrained her, at the only interview which had since taken place between herself and the knight, and which had passed in the presence of her brother, from alluding to the circumstance. Maudsley's language had been so incoherent and incomprehensible, that at times she feared that his brain had been unsettled, at others she was almost ready to believe in the reality of the preternatural influence to which he had alluded in such a passionate manner, and to imagine that it was even extending itself over her own fate. She struggled long and deeply with these emotions, as she wandered in the silent forest. At times she doubted whether the sacrifice which she had made to her brother, a sacrifice of a whole life, was indeed a just and worthy one. Even if it were right to consecrate her own existence to his, was it just to trifle with the welfare of another? and if, without any thought but Maudsley's happiness, and laying

aside all useless, although womanly reserve, she had approached her lover boldly, determined to pluck out the heart of the whole mystery which enveloped them, would it not have been better for all?

Exhausted and harassed by her unprofitable musings, she violently aroused herself with the intention of returning to her home. To her surprise, she found, after making one or two turns, and becoming at each turn more bewildered, that she had unconsciously wandered farther than she intended; and that she had, for the first time for many months, entirely lost her way. As the day was drawing to a close, she became, in her anxiety to hurry to the right track again, still more and more embarrassed. It had been an unusual thing for her to venture unattended to any considerable distance in the wilderness; but the day had been so sultry, the freshness of the forest so inviting, and her reverie so deep, that she had unconsciously wandered too far. It was now in vain for her to attempt to recognise any familiar feature in the landscape. Although there was still a sufficiency of daylight left, as the summer's sun had but just descended, yet it would have required a more practised eye than hers to have read the language of that sylvan scene. To one educated as she had been in the quiet, cultivated gardens of England, the maze of the forest was an inscrutable mystery. It was no longer possible for her to select any single and well-remembered landmark. Still her self-possession was not easily disturbed, and after wandering for a few minutes longer, she arrived at a small natural opening, where she felt certain that she had never found herself before. A high ledge of granite rose from the edge of this valley, swelling upwards through the forest in a westerly direction. Esther began to ascend this cliff to obtain, if possible, a distant view which might enable her to form some conjecture as to the path which she was to follow. With much effort she arrived upon the broad flat summit of the

granite mass, where she sank for a moment exhausted. As she lay there upon that isolated promontory, she seemed like a shipwrecked victim cast upon some rocky and desolate isle. From east to west, from north to south, the unfathomable forest flowed round her, like a sea. The myriad leaves, already agitated by the evening wind which had so long delayed its coming, now murmured like the awakening surge.

Recovering from her exhaustion, she arose and looked anxiously around. Alas! she could not discover the slightest indication of any thing familiar to guide her footsteps. In whatever direction she strained her eyes, still rose and rolled before her sight that green and boundless ocean.

She took a silver whistle which hung at her waist, and which she had been accustomed to use as a signal to her brother and his servants, and blew a shrill blast upon it, without the slightest expectation that its tremulous and slender noté could penetrate to her own abode. The faint vibration soon died upon the air, but just awakening a slight and feeble echo which floated back to her ear like the voice of some gentle wood-spirit. Again and again she mechanically sounded the slender notes, and felt a vague terror stealing over her as she listened to the gentle but unearthly tones, by which it seemed to be mocked and mimicked in the distance. Suddenly, as she blew her final and despairing blast, and was about descending from her elevated position, her ear was startled by another and most mysterious sound. Just as the delicate echo which had responded to her own last signal, had melted into air, the tone seemed suddenly caught up and repeated; gently at first, and then more loudly, till she was surprised to hear, as it were, an answering signal to her own. A hope sprang up in her bosom as she listened to this distant note, and yet she was still more perplexed and bewildered, because it was not the signal that had been concerted between her brother and the other inmates of her household

with herself. Again she awoke the silence with her instrument; and now as the last echoes subsided, the clear tones of a distant lute rose upon the air, in a strain of exquisite melody. Esther listened with a vague sensation of awe. It seemed as if some enchantment were spread over the forest. The instrument was struck by the hand of a master. The music, although plaintive and touching, was highly intricate and artificial in its character, and Esther's bewilderment, as she listened to this spirit-like melody, was complete.

The strain was finished, and silence again brooded over the scene. Who the invisible artist was, and what his purpose might be, she could not guess. Was this vast wilderness peopled by aerial spirits, of which the old world's grey mythology had not dreamed? Were these viewless wanderers of the wood beneficent or malignant in their nature? Had this mystic strain sounded upon her ear only to perplex her still farther, and lead her on into still deeper and more hidden intricacies of the forest?

She stood in that lonely spot, pondering upon the strange circumstances which surrounded her, and irresolute what course to pursue. Suddenly, as she looked towards the wood, which inclosed on all sides the rock where she was standing, she thought she saw the motions of a living creature amid the branches of a tree. A feeling of terror came over her, and she remained with her eyes fixed upon the spot. She was not mistaken. It was not the evening wind which stirred the foliage. Presently a slender branch was moved cautiously aside, and Esther heard a low, whispering sound. Her blood began to freeze, the tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and she remained motionless as a statue, awaiting, in silent horror, the danger which was to befall her. As she gazed upon the spot where she had perceived the motion of the foliage, with senses sharpened by apprehension, she now distinctly saw two bright,

savage eyes glaring directly upon her face. What wild denizen of the forest it was, whether savage beast or still more savage man, she knew not. Her suspense was but short, for presently a shrill whoop struck her ear, and at the next moment a painted Indian, with bow and tomahawk, sprang through the thicket, and stood close to her upon the rocky platform. Esther uttered not a sound, but dropped upon her knees, raising her clasped hands in mute supplication. For a brief space the Indian stood stock-still, gazing at her in grim admiration.

'Twas a strange, but fearful sight, could one have looked upon those two breathing statues, placed upon that rocky pedestal — upon the bronze, impassible savage, upon the motionless marble of Esther's kneeling figure. How long they remained in this strange position, she could not tell, for into each of those moments was crowded an age of agony; but it had at last its termination. The savage moved towards her, as she still remained there upon her knees, and with a succession of rapid gestures intimated that she must follow him. Finding her still immovable, he made use of one or two distorted English phrases, which produced as little effect. Becoming impatient at last, he strode forward, seized her by the hair of her head, and attempted to tear her away. At that instant her agony burst forth in one wild shriek. The savage, unheeding her screams and struggles, and still bent upon his purposes, seized her in his powerful arms, lifted her from the ground, and was bearing her away, when suddenly another yell rose upon the air, and caused her foe to pause for a moment where he stood. In the next instant two other Indians, armed to the teeth, sprang nimbly upon the ledge, and confronted the captor and his victim. Finding himself thus beset, the foe of Esther placed her gently upon the ground, and stood for a moment at bay. It was but an instant, for he was soon desperately

beset by the two new-comers. His resistance was but momentary, for finding himself so much overmatched, the wary savage, dexterously avoiding a blow which was near cleaving his skull, suddenly threw himself bodily over the high and precipitous rock, caught at a projecting branch of a stunted oak which grew half way down, and swinging himself nimbly from one point to another, soon disappeared in the thicket. Esther remained, more dead than alive, upon the very spot in which her enemy had left her, hardly able to lift her eyes towards her new captors, and venturing scarcely to doubt that she had but escaped one danger to fall into another to the full as formidable. There was a brief pause of a few moments, during which she remained mute and motionless, but not insensible, when at last the silence was broken by a shrill and peculiar cry, uttered by one of the savages. After a brief delay, the cry seemed to be answered at a slight distance, by a clear, exquisite melody, played by the same instrument which had excited her wonder but a short time before. Esther knew not why, but her heart, which was almost dead within her, began to beat with a vague and trembling hope, as that delicate strain fell upon her ear. Earthly or aerial, the invisible musician seemed to be in league with her present captors, and it seemed impossible that such gentle sounds should breathe of danger and of blood. It was strange, but at that moment it seemed as if her curiosity was even stronger than her fears. She started to her feet, looked for the first time at her new companions, and was more pleased than astonished to find that the expression of their painted faces was not ferocious, and that their gestures seemed respectful. She stood anxiously awaiting the termination of the adventure with more of hope than terror. Presently a light step was heard in the thicket at the base of the ledge. She turned in the direction of the sound, and saw a slight but active figure ascending the cliff.

The new comer was no savage. Esther saw it at a glance. There was still ample light to read his countenance, and she felt a sensation of relief as she looked upon the stranger, who was advancing softly towards her. His countenance was smooth and very fair; the features were those of a delicate and beautiful youth. He was dressed in a somewhat fantastic but European garb; wore pistols in the girdle which bound his slender waist, and held a kind of partisan or spear-headed staff in his hand. A small musical instrument, of peculiar structure, which hung carelessly upon his shoulder, left no doubt that the invisible musician, whose strains had so excited her wonder, stood in reality before her.

If her fancy had been bewildered before, when she had but heard those singular melodies and knew not whether they proceeded from earth or air, she was not much less perplexed, now that she gazed upon the singular being who had thus presented himself before her.

In the mean time the youth had approached, and stood gazing upon her face with eyes which spoke strange language. The expression of his countenance was earnest, at times tender, but changeable, and it ever and anon became wild and almost fierce.

After gazing upon her for a few moments, he addressed a hurried observation, in an unknown tongue, to his two attendants, who, in obedience to what seemed a command, suddenly descended to the bottom of the cliff, where they placed themselves in a recumbent attitude upon the ground, awaiting the orders of him who seemed their superior. Esther and the youth were left alone upon the cliff.

Observing that her new companion, whether friend or foe, remained silent and serious, gazing upon her countenance as if he would have read her soul, she felt a strange trouble. Determined, if possible, to put an end to this suspense, she collected her thoughts and addressed him, in low but firm accents.

"I know not who or whence you may be," she said, "but your looks are gentle, and your countenance shows you to be of English, or at least, of European lineage."

"You are right, lady;" answered the stranger, in a low, musical tone. "My lineage is English, my birth-place England, although much of my life hath been passed in other climes."

"Then I cannot doubt," returned Esther, with more confidence, "that I am in the company of a friend. It is, doubtless, by your agency that I have been saved from a fate of unknown horror. And," continued she, with a shudder convulsing her frame, "if I lack words to express my gratitude, you cannot doubt how sincerely it is felt. You know not who I am, but you see before you an English woman, not long a dweller in this wilderness, who hath unluckily lost her way in the forest. If you could guide me to the residence of Walter Ludlow, you would increase my debt to you a thousand-fold. Are you perchance acquainted with the spot where Walter Ludlow dwells?"

"I am, indeed," said the stranger, with a wild and almost savage expression passing like a cloud across his beautiful countenance. "I know the residence of Walter Ludlow well."

"Then I am sure," cried Esther, "that I shall not urge you in vain to conduct me thither."

"I shall do so, Esther Ludlow," answered the stranger—"doubt it not. Although you have wandered far enough to perplex yourself, yet is the way homeward neither long nor difficult. I pledge myself to conduct you thither."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks!" answered Esther. "I knew that your purposes could hardly prove unfriendly. But it seems that my name is known to you."

"Aye, lady," answered the other, "your name and person are both well known to me."

"'T is strange!" cried Esther, "for surely never have my eyes looked upon you before. Is it, indeed," continued she,

musingly to herself, "is it indeed a gentle spirit of these ancient woods, sent hither to relieve me in my hour of peril?" As Esther gazed upon the stranger, his very beautiful countenance, the gentleness and elegance of his person, so strangely contrasting with the savage scenery around them, and the romantic character of his whole appearance, almost authorized the belief that he was rather one of those aerial beings "who play i' the plighted clouds," than a mortal denizen of the wilderness.

"And know you my brother, Walter Ludlow?" said she aloud.

"I have never looked upon his face," was the reply.

"Why, this is stranger still," thought Esther. "And are you a permanent sojourner in the wilderness?"

"Nay; with me nothing is permanent," replied the stranger. "Change," continued he, "is the element in which I have my being. Ask of yonder purple cloud," said he, pointing upwards, "which even now floats by the rising moon, and for an instant is steeped in its silver radiance, ask if its glory be permanent. Ask how soon it will be mingling its being in the tempest's rack, and sweeping round the world, destroying and destroyed? No, lady, change is my element; alas, in all regards save one, save one!"

The enigmatical language of the stranger seemed to confirm Esther's suspicions. Still there was something earnest and even tender in his looks and language, something gentle in his melancholy, that touched her heart and forced her to reject the fanciful supposition.

"'T is strange," said she, "that my own person should be familiar to you, and that of Walter Ludlow unknown ——"

"Is Walter Ludlow the only dweller in the wilderness in whom you feel an interest?" asked the stranger, abruptly.

"Nay," answer Esther, "there be many of the scattered settlers in this neighborhood who have my warmest sympathy."

"And yet," continued the other, "there is one who hath

sojourned here many months, whom one cause alone brought hither. 'T is strange," continued he, abstractedly, " that there should be such power in a woman's face, to lead across wintry seas, and to chain in howling deserts, one whose heart was careless, whose existence was bright. Let me look once more upon that face."

As he spoke, the youth advanced close to Esther, laid his hand gently upon her shoulder, and gazed long and intently upon her, as if he would have read her soul. Esther started back and colored slightly, at this familiarity. A vague fear stole over her mind, but at the moment she seemed so entirely in the stranger's power, that she was unwilling unnecessarily to excite his anger. Moreover, there was so much gentleness and delicacy in all his movements, that she felt, in spite of the loneliness of her situation and the mysterious character of her companion, a sensation of confidence, for which she could hardly account.

" Fear nothing, lady," said the stranger, in gentle tones; " fear not that I should gaze too long or too fondly upon your face. Fate having thus accidentally placed me by the side of a sorceress, whose power I have dreaded, I did but desire to study the character of her enchantment. Fear not that I, too, shall feel the spell. Nay, believe me, how much injury soever we may mutually and unwittingly inflict upon each other, when I swear to you at this moment that I wish you well, and that my intentions toward you are fair and friendly. One single question more, and I will lead you to the dwelling of Walter Ludlow."

" Speak on," replied Esther, utterly perplexed by her companion's language.

" Do you love Harry Maudsley?" asked the youth, with startling abruptness.

Esther recoiled a step from her companion, as he thus addressed to her this extraordinary question, and hesitated a moment ere she replied.

"I know not who or whence you are," she said at last, "nor your motives, in thus taking advantage of my lonely situation to insult one who hath never injured you. It is base, it is unmanly, it is unworthy of an Englishman, of whatsoever creed or party he may be."

"Nay, lady," answered the other calmly, "I meant not thus to move your indignation. But I *will* take advantage of our present situation, not to inflict injuries or insults, but to render you a service. I implore you to answer my question. Believe the word of one who wishes well to both of ye, when he swears that he hath no evil motive in asking a question, rude, perhaps, and sudden, but as honest as it is plain. Tell me, do you love Henry Maudsley?"

Esther felt extreme wonder that the extraordinary familiarity of the stranger did not, for some unaccountable reason, excite the indignation in her bosom, which she felt should have been aroused. The voice and manner of her companion seemed to divest his language of much of its intrinsic boldness. Something, too, of the indefinite impression that her companion possessed some weird influence over her destiny, and that his purposes were kindly, though mysterious, still lingered in her fancy, and was not without its effects.

"I wish well to Henry Maudsley," she replied, wondering, as she did so, at her docility.

"Do you love Henry Maudsley?" replied her companion, with even more excitement of manner. "I implore you for the last time, nay, I command you, to answer that question. Your own fate, his own, and that of others whom you dream not of, may be at this moment trembling upon your answer. An answer I will have, ere either of us leaves this labyrinth. Fate hath conducted me hither to read a riddle, and I swear to you that the riddle shall now be solved."

"Is this threatening language worthy of you?" said Esther.

"Is this an English gentleman's courtesy to an unprotected woman?"

"Pardon me, lady, but I could set my life upon this cast. Whether I use threats, promises, or prayers, my object is the same, your welfare and my own. The moments are rapidly passing; you know not how much of weal or woe your answer may effect. Answer me, I do not say truly, for truth alone could speak from those pure lips, but answer me at once. Do you love Henry Maudsley?"

"I do," murmured Esther, in a soft, broken voice, overcome at last by the stranger's passionate demeanor and her own vague fears.

"Thank God for that answer," cried the youth, with strange exultation.

There was a pause of a few moments, during which Esther strove in vain to collect herself. The silence was broken by the stranger, who addressed her again in an earnest but a calmer tone.

"Listen to me once more," said he, "I give you a warning, which should have some value in your mind. Sport not with the happiness of two hearts which have grown together. Pervert not the destiny of Maudsley, nor your own. Maudsley loves you more than life. His fate is in your hands."

Esther, confounded, at times almost indignant at the language of her companion, uttered not a reply. There was another pause. After the expiration of a few moments, the youth suddenly moved towards Esther.

"The night is advancing. Shall I not conduct you to your brother's residence?" said he.

"Ah, let me entreat you to hasten thither," replied Esther, "and spare me, I beseech you, for the remainder of our companionship, language like the mysterious words which you have lately spoken. Indeed, they trouble and perplex my soul.

"Fear nothing, Esther Ludlow," replied the youth; "and now let me conduct you from this lonely spot."

As he spoke, he gently assisted her along the uncertain footing of the rock. When they had at last reached the bottom of the ledge the stranger whistled thrice. Forthwith two dusky figures sprang from the thicket as noiselessly as phantoms, and without uttering a word glided slowly before them through the thicket. The stranger seemed to be as familiar with every step of those bosky bourns as if he had been indeed a spirit haunting their sylvan solitude. A tortuous deer-path, winding through the tangled woods, seemed the thread which was to lead them from their leafy labyrinth. To Esther the path would have been almost invisible by daylight, but at night it seemed as if magic alone could enable their shadowy guides to pass thus rapidly before them through the thicket, and her slender and youthful companion to follow their track so carelessly and yet so accurately.

After a rapid and silent march of some half hour's duration, they emerged into a broad, open glade, which was familiar to her eyes. Through the majestic trees at the farther extremity, the level line of light streamed from the windows of her own cottage. Having reached this spot, the youth paused and once more addressed her:

"We part at this moment; whether we meet again I know not; but remember my words of warning, and remember that I wish you well. There is one other warning which I meant to give you, and the hour has come."

"Speak," said Esther, wondering what new mystery was impending, but feeling relieved of much of her anxiety, now that her companion had in reality brought her in safety to her own dwelling-place.

The stranger advanced closely to her, and once more laid his hand upon her shoulder. "Danger and distress threaten you,"

he whispered hoarsely in her ear, "in the person of a certain mysterious knight. I tell you to beware of him. Shun him as you would shrink from a subtle and poisonous serpent. Distrust every word, every motion, every look. Farewell, Esther Ludlow, and may God preserve you from every danger."

There was a pause. Esther trembled, she knew not why, at the warning language of her companion. She collected herself, however, by a determined effort, and turned to thank the stranger for his safe guidance through the forest, but he was gone. She called in a loud whisper, there was no answer; she advanced a few steps towards the forest from whence they had emerged, but the youth, with his shadowy attendants, had suddenly disappeared.

Wearied and harassed by the fatiguing adventures of the evening, she moved with a desponding step towards the cottage. As she approached her home, a tall, dark figure, bearing a lighted torch, suddenly crossed the glade, and strode rapidly towards her.

"We have been searching for you far and near," said a deep, earnest voice; "thank God, you are found again."

Esther shuddered, for she recognised the voice of Sir Christopher Gardiner.

CHAPTER VI.

DISSIMULATION.

A FEW moments later, and Esther sat within her own cottage walls. Every living creature had deserted it, for Walter Ludlow with his servants, alarmed at the protracted absence of Esther, were anxiously wandering through the forest in search of her. Esther was left alone with the knight, who, having found himself accidentally at nightfall in the neighborhood, had learned the alarming tidings of Esther's absence from her brother, and had volunteered to assist them in the search. He was just returning from an unsuccessful expedition in a different direction from that taken by the others, when he suddenly encountered her a few moments after the stranger had left her.

Esther felt a sensation of despair as she found herself thus suddenly in the presence of one who had always excited a vague and unaccountable fear in her bosom, and against whom she had been at that moment so mysteriously warned. Overpowered by fatigue, and by the keen emotions which, for the last hour, had been agitating her, she sank almost fainting upon a seat.

The knight gazed with a long, bold, impassioned glance at that form of majestic beauty, thus reclining before him, so helpless and so lonely. A wild fire danced in his eye. A cloud of stormy passion seemed sweeping across his brow. His features quivered, his frame shook with emotion. Suddenly he aroused himself, and with a strong effort seemed to control the struggling devil in his soul.

"Fool, fool," he muttered, "wouldst thou dash into fragments thus the work of years? Has time brought no coolness to thy blood?"

Checking himself thus, he busily, but respectfully, employed himself in assisting Esther. He bathed her face with water; he chafed her hands; he employed all fitting expedients with the quiet but active tenderness of a woman. When she was partially recovered from her prostration, he administered to her a few drops of a potent restorative from a flask which he bore about him.

After the expiration of a few minutes, she was herself again. She looked around in bewilderment, and started visibly, as she became aware of the presence of Gardiner, who, seated respectfully at a distance, was gazing intently upon her face.

"Be not alarmed, Esther Ludlow," said he gently, "although your brother is absent, he cannot fail to return very soon. In the mean time, be assured that you are in the company of an earnest and sincere friend."

"Where is my brother?" said Esther, faintly.

"Alarmed at your disappearance, he is searching the forest, attended by his servants. It was my fortunate lot to find you, as I was returning alone from an unsuccessful search."

"Would that Walter were here," exclaimed Esther.

"He cannot tarry long," answered Sir Christopher; "but if it be your pleasure, I will go forth and seek him. I may thus convey to him a little earlier the news of your fortunate appearance."

"Ah, do so, do so," said Esther, with a shuddering, imploring accent, as if she were striving to exorcise a fiend from her presence.

"I go," said Gardiner, "although it grieves me to leave you thus unprotected; it grieves me more," he added with a sigh, "that my presence seemeth so odious in your eyes."

"Nay, nay," said Esther, alarmed, lest her manner should have betrayed too much aversion, "but surely it is fitting that the anxiety of Walter Ludlow should be shortened as much as lieth in our power."

"Enough, Esther," said Gardiner, in the same melancholy and respectful tone, "you shall be obeyed. Think not, however, that I should have been so base as to have taken advantage of this unguarded moment to urge a hopeless suit. You know," he continued, seeming fiercely to control a rising feeling, "that these lips have never dared to speak of emotions which are older, deeper, fiercer, than dwell in many bosoms. Is it not strange that such a one as I have been, should be a changeling now? Is it not strange that a wonderful and holy vision should have risen upon and illuminated my soul in this wilderness? Aye, I have heard a voice crying out to me from the very depths of the desert. I looked, and behold, it was to me as if the gates of Paradise were opening upon mine eyes, as if I saw the celestial battlements thronged with the cherubim and seraphim, and heard the immortal strains of harp and sackbut, even from before the footstool of God! I bowed to the dust, as the celestial vision swept over me."

"And why speakest thou to me of these things," interrupted Esther, "and least of all, at this place and season?"

"Because the floodgates of my heart have been for once broken open, and the long-imprisoned feelings rush forth beyond control," answered Gardiner, with rising impetuosity. "I tell you, Esther Ludlow, that it is to thee, and to thee alone, that I owe this glorious vision. I care not what may be the issue of my mortal passion, nor to how hopeless a life of agony your fiat may condemn my heart. I shall always bless thee upon my knees, that thou, under God, art the cause of the new life that has been infused into my being. If, as I humbly dare to hope, the Holy Ghost hath descended like a dove upon the raging waters of my sinful heart, and at last found a resting-place there, thou, only thou, art the cause. Is this not reason enough that I should devote a life to your service, if so poor a boon could in aught advantage you? I speak not of earthly hope, but surely,

surely thou wilt not reject the devotion of a heart which owes its salvation to your blessed example."

"Too much of this, too much of this," cried Esther, rising from her seat, with a troubled and almost irritated demeanor, "let me implore you to delay no longer in seeking out my brother. This language, be it sincere or otherwise, sounds harshly in my ears, neither is this a fitting time nor place for such a theme."

Without uttering a word, and with eyes bent modestly and meekly upon the ground, the knight glided towards the door. He had scarcely opened it, when there was a noise without, the trampling of many feet, the blazing of many torches, and then Walter Ludlow, informed of Esther's safety by a glance of Sir Christopher, rushed into the room, and folded his sister to his heart.

Great was the joy among the inmates of Ludlow's household, and fervent the thanks offered by them to Gardiner, who was supposed to have been a second time her deliverer from death.

After a short time passed by the brother and sister in congratulations, Esther narrated her adventure briefly and succinctly. She dwelt as lightly as possible upon the singular and mysterious personage to whom her deliverance was owing; but she was startled, as she alluded to the youth, to observe the dark and extraordinary expression of Sir Christopher's face. He uttered not a syllable, but his dark eye seemed to plunge like a poniard into her heart. The expression, although fierce, was momentary. It had passed away sooner than the wonder which it excited in Esther's bosom. Still, she felt an instinctive reluctance at dwelling upon the details of her adventure in Gardiner's presence, and she accordingly related scarcely a syllable of the extraordinary conversation which had passed between her and the unknown.

As the evening wore away, the conversation had rolled upon other matters. Sir Christopher, who was to be the guest of

Walter Ludlow that night, made some inquiries touching the expedition of Endicott, who was to have set sail many weeks before, and was hourly expected in New England.

"I can conceive," said he, "no nobler lot than his. To found an empire upon a great idea, to plant a seed silently in the soil of this wilderness, certain that, under the shade which will spring from that slender cause, whole nations will repose, is not an obscure, although it may be a painful and a self-denying lot."

"Only a petty soul," replied Esther, who was pleased in spite of herself, at hearing language from Gardiner's lips with which she could feel an honest sympathy, "only a petty soul would deem that destiny obscure by which a few humble individuals are singled out to lay the corner-stone of an empire such as the world hath not yet seen. None but petty souls would count the privations, the labors, or the tears, in the midst of which so high a destiny is accomplished."

"Aye," said Gardiner, "to be not the Cadmus, nor the Romulus, nor the pirate chieftain, planting wild dynasties with the bloody hand, but rather the prophet and the lawgiver of an infant state — to be the Moses, the Joshua, of brave enthusiasts, who have turned their backs on home and happiness, only that their faces may still be turned toward God; this is ambition worthy of a lofty soul!"

"Aye," said Esther, "so seemeth it to me. England groans under the worst of tyrannies, the dreary tyranny of the mitre. Less dreary, less dead than such a land, is this howling wilderness. Whether such is to be forever the condition of our country, or whether at some distant day the star of hope is to arise, who shall be bold enough to prophesy? For myself, I regret not my lot."

"Nor I," said Gardiner, enthusiastically, "for if a happier day is ever to dawn in England, it must be, methinks, after long and fearful convulsions. The promised land of religious free-

dom may be reached at last, but a red sea of human blood rolls between our suffering people and that distant shore. Better, far better, the air of the wilderness, better the wild altars, crowned with the virgin flowers of a purer world."

The hours rolled on. Esther was struck with the coincidence of sentiment and opinion between herself and Gardiner, and pleased, not only with the ready response which his eye and tongue seemed to render to her own language, but with the sympathetic anticipation by which he gave exact and eloquent utterance to her own thoughts even as she formed them. She seemed to lose something of her abhorrence of his person and character.

"If Maudsley had but thought and spoken like this stranger," thought she to herself, after the party had separated for the night, and she was alone with her own thoughts—"had Henry Maudsley thus comprehended the depth of my nature, and thus sympathized with rather than scoffed at the aspirings of my soul. Alas! he knows not how the heart which he hath outraged, might perhaps, with the blessing of God, have led his own to better and holier purposes. Alas! Heaven smiles not upon us now!"

CHAPTER VII.

AN ACCOUNT SETTLED.

A FEW days after these events, Sir Christopher Gardiner was walking alone upon the beach of the western cove at Shawmut. He had come thither for the purpose of conferring with the eccentric hermit of the peninsula, but had found him absent. Being anxious for an interview with him, he still loitered in the neighborhood of his cottage, hoping that ere long he would return.

The knight was pondering deeply upon his position in New England, which was harassing and irritating enough, although he had already taken his resolution. As it will be soon more particularly related, the long expected colony of Puritans, under the guidance of Captain John Endicott, had at length arrived at Naumkeak. They were provided with a large grant of land from the New England Council, and although, as yet, the grant was not fortified by a confirmatory charter from the crown, they expected that an ample one, in spite of all opposition and intrigue, would shortly be obtained.

Thomas Morton, Gardiner's chief confidant, ally, and instrument, had, as the knight used so frequently to prophesy, at last irritated the more orderly inhabitants of New England beyond endurance. The expedition against him, we have seen, had been successful. The Plymouth captain had at last, without the effusion of blood, secured the person of the Merry-Mount rioter, and had carried him off a prisoner to Plymouth. Here the defeated and deposed potentate had been summoned before the magistrates and elders of the colony, but had refused in a

lofty manner to acknowledge their jurisdiction. After being detained several weeks a prisoner, he had been finally dispatched to England in a vessel sailing from the Isle of Shoals. He was placed under the charge of John Oldham, the man who claimed the territory at Mishawum under the Gorges grant, and who, several years before, had received such ignominious treatment from the Plymouth settlers. He had lately, however, for purposes of his own, become reconciled, in appearance at least, to those colonists, and it was a striking proof of their confidence in his character as well as his friendship, that the man whom they had, upon a former occasion, so bitterly wronged, should have been selected by them for so responsible a trust. John Oldham, in short, who had been buffeted, thumped, and literally kicked out of Plymouth in 1625, was now charged with the guardianship of Thomas Morton. The lord of Merry-Mount was sent to England to answer to certain charges preferred against him here, the principal of which were, his dealings with the Indians, particularly his supplying them with gunpowder and fire-arms, and the riotous demeanor of himself and his companions at Merry-Mount.

Gardiner had conceived a strong hope that the issue of the campaign against Merry-Mount, would, after all, tend to the furtherance of his own designs. In the first place, although his connection with Morton still remained a secret throughout New England, he feared it might be difficult to conceal their acquaintance much longer. The character of Morton was so reckless and boisterous, that it well nigh neutralized the advantage which might have been derived from his knowledge of the country, and his various accomplishments. If he could have held his tongue, he would have been an excellent conspirator. His brawling propensities made him mischievous.

As for the knight himself, such was his natural genius for intrigue, and so highly had that faculty been cultivated during

his adventurous life, that he really possessed at that moment only a dim and enigmatical existence in the wilderness. So mysteriously did he glide to and fro, now pausing a moment in the rude cabin of some hardy settler; now roving over moor and mountain with the dusky children of the soil; now mingling with the stern and melancholy Puritans in their severe and primitive worship, himself more stern and more melancholy than them all; seen occasionally of all, but mixing with none; the place of his residence and the time of his arrival in the country alike unknown; he seemed but an unreal shadow, a phantom, appearing, vanishing, and re-appearing at different places and seasons, without a definite purpose, and almost without a real existence. So far, his mask had been securely worn, and the Plymouth people had no suspicion of his real character.

This state of things could not, however, be expected to last indefinitely, and the knight, unfortunately, was obliged to consider his projects as postponed for a considerable time. It was therefore rather a relief to him than otherwise, when his anxiety as to Morton was terminated by the capture and deportation of that eccentric personage. In the next place, Gardiner conceived strong hopes from the fortuitous conjunction of Oldham and Morton. Here was a man expressly charged with the safe-keeping of his old ally, who had not only been deeply wronged by the Plymouth Puritans, but who had a powerful claim to a considerable part of the territory now granted to the newly-arrived Massachusetts Puritans. Morton, who was a lawyer by profession, and possessed of no contemptible sagacity in the science, could not fail, in the course of a long voyage to England, to strengthen Oldham's opinions as to the legality of his territorial claim. He was, moreover, almost certain, by his eloquent and sarcastic invectives, to arouse Oldham's dormant indignation against the whole religious party in New England, to inflame his ancient prejudices, and to secure his valuable assistance upon

their arrival in England. Much might be made before the New England Council, and more before the Lords Commissionérs of the Oldham case. As for the charges against Morton, and the punishment likely to be measured out to him, Gardiner gave himself not a moment's uneasiness. Letters which the knight, by the same ship which conveyed the prisoner to England, sent to powerful persons there, made it certain in his own mind, that the Lord of Merry-Mount would escape unscathed, and would be allowed to return to the new world whenever it suited his convenience.

These considerations served to keep hope still burning in Gardiner's mind. Still he felt that his very soul was corroding in the wilderness, and he would have, perhaps, abandoned his enterprise altogether, dissatisfied as he justly was at the supineness of his English confederates, but for the sudden and extraordinary passion which had taken possession of his soul. Indeed, it is impossible to say how much influence the beauty and the imposing character of Esther Ludlow had exerted upon the destiny of this singular adventurer. In other scenes, and under other circumstances, a passion might not have mounted to such a sudden height, in a heart which had been swept by so many and such fierce emotions; but he was idle, he was in the wilderness, and his jaded soul had just been sated with a passion which had burnt itself to ashes. At that very moment he had been aroused from the torpor which seemed to be creeping slowly over his existence, by the sudden emotions excited by the beautiful vision which broke forth upon him in the wilderness.

The purity of Esther's character excited, rather than repelled, the depraved imagination of Gardiner. She seemed to him a priestess, a prophetess, a vestal; and there was so much of the Clodius and the Catiline in his temperament, that the very sacredness of character which would have served as her protecting shield against many men, was in his eyes but as an enticing

veil, enwrapping and enhancing her loveliness. And yet, when he found himself in her presence, he felt at times an unaccountable restraint. Like water dashed from the swan's silvery but impenetrable armor, his impetuous thoughts seemed to recoil harmlessly from the innocence of her soul. It had been easy for him to ingratiate himself with the feeble and dreamy Walter Ludlow, but he felt that he had not yet obtained even the most precarious foothold in the mind of his lofty sister. It was this which impelled him forward, for to such absolute indifference he had not been accustomed during his wild career. Never had he found himself so absorbed by a sentiment, whose indulgence he had been accustomed to look upon as a pastime. It was strange, but it seemed that, at last, his hour of infatuated passion had arrived. It was as if the hard remnant of his inmost nature, which, like the diamond, seemed the final essence of a thousand fires, had at last melted before Esther's crystal purity, as the impenetrable gem dissolves in the burning-glass. Still at that moment, as he stood alone in the summer sunshine, his aspiring thoughts flew upward like eagles. To win so bright a prize was enough to repay his long and languid exile in the desert, even should his other lofty visions fade forever. But they should not fade. Though they seemed to roll themselves away into the azure distance, they were still gilded by the sun, and brightly in that imaginary splendor gleamed the gorgeous towers of his golden dreams. With his imagination bubbling like a witch's cauldron, he paced to and fro upon that lonely beach, chasing the airy shapes which coursed one after another in long procession through his brain.

Thus absorbed, and soothed as he loitered in that solitude by the rippling waves, he was suddenly aroused from his reverie by the appeaarance of something white upon the water. It was a sail at the distance of about half a mile, advancing from the northward, and evidently making its way to the peninsula of Shawmut.

Gardiner watched its motions, supposing that it was probably the solitary inhabitant of the promontory returning to his domain. As the boat neared him, however, his keen eye at once recognised the boat and its occupant, and a dark and singular expression shot across his features. He stood motionless, looking towards the little skiff, as it slowly drifted before the faint summer breeze. In a few moments the keel grated upon the pebbly beach within a few yards of the spot where he stood, and a man sprang hastily out, paused an instant to moor his boat, and then strode directly towards him. The new comer was Henry Maudsley.

"Good morrow, Master Maudsley," said the knight, with unperturbed visage; "if you are bent upon a visit to the hermit of Shawmut this afternoon, I fear, like myself, you are come but upon a fool's errand."

"I thank you, Sir Christopher, for your information, which is doubly agreeable to me," answered Maudsley, whose voice was low and husky. "I did indeed purpose a visit to Master Blaxton to-day, but I am fortunate, both in finding him absent, and in finding yourself as his substitute."

"Indeed," said Gardiner, calmly, "and in what manner can I serve you, Master Maudsley? In what way can I act as the representative of the holy clerk of Shawmut?"

"My affair," answered Maudsley, with rising passion, "my affair with Master Blaxton can be deferred; that with Sir Christopher Gardiner brooks no delay."

"Indeed," said Gardiner, with a sneering affectation of curiosity, "have we such pressing business to settle? Pray, let me remain no longer ignorant of such weighty matters. Let us proceed to business at once."

"With all my heart," said Maudsley, unsheathing his sword with a sudden movement.

"Hey-day, hey-day, Master Maudsley!" said the knight, in

an accent of astonishment, unbaring his own rapier, however, with lightning-like rapidity; "was your voyage to Shawmut this morning made for the special purpose of my assassination? If it be not presumptuous, I would fain ask your cause of quarrel."

"I have no inclination to waste these precious moments in idle brawling," answered Maudsley. "Your own hypocritical heart will tell you in clearer tones than mine, our cause of quarrel. You have escaped me once, through, I could almost believe, supernatural agency. Should I fail a second time to chastise your villany, the fault would be mine."

"These be bold and bitter words," returned Gardiner, who seemed for some mysterious reason to be singularly averse to an encounter with Maudsley. "But stay, the days are long at this particular season, and I am a searcher after truth. Enlighten me, for by St. John, you shall take nothing by your braggadocio humor, and shall lose nothing by a more perspicuous course of conduct."

Maudsley stared at the knight in profound astonishment. He was utterly at a loss to understand what possible motives could restrain him from accepting a combat thus fiercely urged upon him. Of his courage and skill at every weapon he entertained no doubt, and his imperturbable coolness at this particular juncture, proved that he was acting deliberately. Maudsley, as we know, before the particular cause for his hatred had occurred, had already conceived a peculiar and unaccountable detestation of Gardiner, which the knight had upon all occasions appeared very cordially to reciprocate. There had always seemed something more than caprice in Maudsley's aversion, and Gardiner's conduct had always been apparently dictated by some secret, but decided motive. In short, it seemed that Maudsley was governed either by interest, or presentiment, or by both, while Gardiner's hatred was the result of actual, although concealed, knowledge.

As for Sir Christopher, he seemed to have an especial motive

for self-control, and he stood in a careless attitude of defence, like a reposing gladiator, calmly, but fixedly, regarding his antagonist in the eye, and silently awaiting his response.

"I came not here to play the fool," said Maudsley at last, "nor to answer to any catechism. Neither am I disposed to enter upon a detail of grievances of which you are as well instructed as myself. If you must have reasons, let this suffice," and, as he spoke, the impetuous youth endeavored to strike his antagonist with the flat of his sword.

"Fairly and softly," answered the knight, coolly, but adroitly, recoiling a few paces to avoid the proffered insult. "If there be really so many and such weighty reasons already existing, why invent fictitious and imaginary ones? Tell me frankly and nobly, as befits the dignity of this imposing solitude, tell me plainly your wrongs, and if there be no redress, I swear to you, you shall have vengeance."

Maudsley was more and more irritated, and yet more and more perplexed. An impetuous, passionate man, particularly if he be very young, is very apt to be worsted in an altercation with a cool, adroit man of maturer years; and he is the more likely to be worsted if he happens to be entirely in the right. Feeling sure to be baffled in argument, because he felt himself too angry to utter an intelligible syllable, he took refuge for the moment in silence.

"Then you persist in denying me your catalogue of grievances," continued Gardiner, after a pause. "'T is strange, but one would have even expected eloquence from your lips upon such a subject. Since, however, you will not speak, and since I have no more desire than yourself for prolonging this interview, I shall myself state your cause of quarrel. It lies in an almond shell, good Master Maudsley, even in the soft eyes of a certain Puritan maiden ——— "

Maudsley started, and made a fierce, quick, gesture of assent.

"Jealousy is a common passion," continued Gardiner, "a common cause of quarrel. I will not say that in some respects there may not be foundation for your jealousy. But, good Master Maudsley, where many strive but one can be chosen."

"In one word," cried Maudsley, boiling over with his hitherto painfully repressed wrath, "I pronounce you a hypocrite and a villain. Whence and wherefore sprang the hatred which I have borne you since your dark shadow first fell across my path, I ask not. There may be hatred at first sight, it seems, as ardent as first love. That you are a hypocrite, I know. Your object is the perdition of one who, in her saintly purity, is as far above your sphere as heaven from hell. I know that your designs are all artful and base, and that your whole existence in this wilderness, of which you prate so loftily, is one long lie."

"And think you," answered Sir Christopher, still preserving the same careless attitude, in spite of Maudsley's violent language, "and think you to arrogate to yourself a monopoly of jealousy? Think you that the dark passion finds its only home in your bosom? Think you that I, even I," continued he, with an ominous expression upon his dark brow, and with a voice of rising passion, "am a stranger to your sweet and stolen interviews with a certain gentle, blue-eyed, mysterious youth? Think you that I am your laughing-stock and your dupe? Hath your effrontery grown to such a height that you defy me to the teeth, with your saintly heroics touching the fair Puritan? Shame on you, shame, Master Maudsley!"

A sudden light broke upon Maudsley's mind as the knight gave utterance to these taunts. He stood for an instant bewildered, and hardly knowing what to reply, or whither this strange interview was tending. He was far from suspecting the real cause of Gardiner's singular forbearance even now, although so suddenly enlightened as to a part of the mysteries which had

enveloped him. He replied not immediately, but stood leaning upon his sword, and reflecting for an instant upon his course.

"Fool, fool," muttered the knight to himself—"Are my projects, after all, to be foiled by the rash temper of this hot-headed boy? I thought him already in my power. Hath the charm failed? By heavens! it shall be decided, and at once. Hark you, my gentle master, I have a word for your most secret ear," said he aloud.

"And fear you," said Maudsley, "that yonder crows will prate of your secret, that it must be whispered in the silent wilderness?"

"Nay, nay, my quick-tempered friend," replied the knight, "but there be many words and many matters which sound more becomingly in a whisper, even though there be no lurking ear in the whole universe, save those for whom they are meant. Hark you, I say ——!"

With this, the knight strode hastily forward to Maudsley, and whispered in his ear for half a minute.

Maudsley started, as if a serpent had stung him.

"Liar and villain!" he cried, almost beside himself with fury.—"It needed but this to set my soul on fire. Defend yourself; for nothing human shall restrain me longer."

With this Maudsley threw himself madly upon Sir Christopher, who now entirely upon his guard, received his onset with perfect calmness and precision. Maudsley, by profession a soldier, was daring and skilful with his weapon, but he was inflamed by passion. Gardiner was a consummate swordsman, and besides, was wary and collected. Finding that his project of making Maudsley useful to him had failed, the knight was now desirous of being relieved of the embarassment caused by his presence in New England. The combat proved desperate but brief. Maudsley, after a few fierce passes, which were skilfully parried by Sir Christopher, at last by a lucky feint, pushed

within his adversary's guard. His rapier's point was upon the knight's breast, and it seemed that his last and desperate thrust must necessarily, at that instant, terminate the adventurer's career, when, to his astonishment and rage, the treacherous blade, encountering some hidden obstacle, shivered at the hilt. At the same moment as he stood disconcerted and defenceless, the knight sprang nimbly forward and passed his rapier through his body. Maudsley glared at his foe with a last look of defiance, and fell to the earth without uttering a sound.

Sir Christopher stood stock-still for a few moments, gazing upon his prostrate adversary, while a thousand dark emotions chased each other across his brow.

'T was thy destiny," he hoarsely muttered, "thy destiny and mine. I swear, I sought to spare thee, but thou shouldest not have crossed my path. Have I not avoided thee as my evil genius? My God!" exclaimed the knight in a still more husky tone, as he bent over the fallen Maudsley, "what a terrible resemblance, closer and more fearful even than in life! The same haughty features, the same chestnut locks. My God! that icy look, that ghastly resemblance will haunt me to my grave!"

Muttering thus incoherently, Gardiner stood musing in that terrible companionship, till the cloudless midsummer's sun was nearly set. His level beams poured full across the glassy cove, and rained a flood of light upon the spot where Maudsley lay. It was a fearful contrast, — that virgin wilderness, that golden summer sunset, and that scene of blood. Sir Christopher Gardiner had been familiar with scenes of violence even from his boyhood, but there was something appalling to him in the solitude which had been just profaned by the desperate affray. It seemed to his heated imagination, as he gazed around him, as if the world had suddenly renewed its infancy, and that the

first murder had at that instant been enacted. His brother's blood seemed to cry to him from the ground. He sprang to his feet, as if he felt the hot brand searing his forehead, and fled from the spot like the guilty and conscience-stricken Cain.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND APPARITION.

The hermit of Shawmut had devoted a long summer's day to a solitary excursion in the wilderness. He felt no fear in rambling to and fro, either upon his bull, upon his feet, or in his boat, for he was regarded with considerable reverence by the natives, with whom he occasionally came in contact, and to whom his skill in pharmacy had often rendered essential service. He was indeed, as was natural, looked up to by those scattered and benighted creatures, as a being not belonging to earth, and possessed of superior attributes to mortals. His striking, and almost ethereal appearance, his solitary habits, and his abstracted and dreamy manner, contributed not a little to encourage this belief.

That morning, he had been tempted by a summer's breeze to put forth in his little skiff, which experience had taught him to manage with great adroitness. He had, after tossing about for an idle hour or two upon the billows of the cove, amused himself by entering the mouth of the river which discharges itself into the bay nearly opposite his abode.

The slow and tortuous Quinobequin, as the River Charles was then more properly called, which, as Captain John Smith had already informed the world, "doth pierce many days' journey into the entrails of that country," was a river whose calm, deep, almost stagnant, and at the same time highly erratic character, was singularly in harmony with that of the profound, wandering, gentle, unimpassioned hermit, who, first of civilized beings, then dwelt upon its banks. A brawling, shallow, headlong stream, now whirling through gravelly ravines, now dashing down preci-

pices of granite, would have been no fitting companion for the exile. Blaxton thought, as he idly floated up the long reaches, or rowed himself against the lazy current, in the short, sudden coils, by which the river incessantly seemed doubling in its languid course, that the stream was a fit emblem of himself. Winding noiselessly and obscurely to and fro among the woods and meadows, the river flowed calmly along, with scarce an eddy upon its glassy surface, silent, but deep, hesitating, meandering, and yet, after leagues of its serpentine motion, accomplishing so little, that a child in a few bounds might measure the whole length of its actual progress towards its goal.

Still, within its unruffled depths were ever mirrored Nature's freshest charms. The forest-crowned hills came from afar to bathe themselves in its tranquil flood, the serene heaven, with its floating clouds, the silver majesty of the moon, the countless troops of stars, and even the effulgence of the day-god himself, were daily and nightly reflected in its placid bosom. And was not this a compensation for the absence of that restless energy which would have hurried it faster to the eternal sea, but would have shivered its transparent surface into a thousand fragments, and rendered its nature tumultuous and troubled?

Thus mused the contemplative solitary, as hour after hour he loitered in his bark along that solitary stream. Although gentle and quiet, there was still variety in his inland voyage. Here, the river coiled itself, like a silver snake, through a wide expanse of meadow, where, if he stepped ashore, the rank grass, unconscious of the scythe, grew higher than his breast. Anon, he floated into a more secluded reach, where the stream dilated for a moment to a mimic bay, where his oar would disturb a fleet of anchored wood-ducks. Again, as the river narrowed itself within its banks, a grey and decaying trunk of some fallen tree would almost obstruct his passage, from which the basking turtle would drop hastily and heavily into the stream, or the

headlong frogs dash themselves off in nimble and grotesque alarm. At times, his course lay through broad and level meadows, where grew only the ringletted and drooping elms, the most graceful, the most feminine, and the most fragile of trees; and which, sometimes like verdant fountains, sometimes like foliage-wreathed urns, sometimes like bending, graceful, suddenly metamorphosed nymphs, with their green tresses sweeping the ground, stood, singly or in detached and picturesque groups, along the moist and open meads. Again, the river would lose itself beneath shadowy and deeply wooded banks, where the tangled forest grew close to the water's edge, where the various melody of summer birds was never silent, where the whir of the strong-winged partridge would fall suddenly upon the ear, where the slender deer would steal timidly forth to slake its thirst at the river's brink, or the grim figure of the brown, indolent bear would appear for an instant through the thick curtain of the midsummer foliage. There, the maple, the birch, the alder, and the oak, were all matted together, in intricate luxuriance, and the hermit would often pause to contemplate some Laocoon-like group of mighty trees, entangled, interlaced and suffocated in the vast coils of some serpent-like grape-vine. A thousand flowers of brilliant hues, decorated his lonely progress. Immense fields of the strong and tangled pickerel-weed, with its broad lotus-like leaves and flaunting flowers, now clogged his pathway; and now, a multitude of white and fragrant water-lilies thronging around his bark, like troops of amorous, odor-breathing water-nymphs, seemed to woo him to repose. The delicate arrow-head, with its spikes of pale and tender blossoms, the intensely brilliant cardinal flower, which looked as if it should be transplanted to some ancient cathedral window-pane, where placed upon the bosom of some gorgeous saint, its vivid crimson should reflect the sunlight for ages; the stately eupatorium, the fragrant azalea, the gaudy sunflower, and a host of other name-

less weeds, grew in rank and tangled confusion along the oozy bank.

The hermit moved slowly along his watery path, solacing himself with the accurate observation of nature, which was the business of his life, ever and anon pausing to cull his simples, to collect his herbs and flowers, with which his little canoe was already amply freighted; now losing himself in the vague reveries, which he so dearly loved, and now pausing under the shadow of some spreading tree, to take from his scrip and hastily to consume his slender repast.

Thus, upon noiseless wings, flew the golden hours of that summer's day. Towards nightfall, the solitary had returned from his excursion, and anchored his bark close to his cottage. Entering his humble dwelling-place, he busied himself a long time in assorting the additions which he had that day made to his collections of natural history. When he was at last wearied of his task, he knelt down and offered up a prayer of gratitude to Him who thus sustained his faltering steps in that remote solitude. He then turned over the leaves of his Bible, pondering as he read. The hours stole on, the slow-moving finger of his clock already pointed to midnight, his eyelids were already heavy with sleep, when the vast silence around him was suddenly broken by a fearful shriek. The hermit started to his feet, the scream seemed to pierce his heart. He hurried to the window and looked out upon the night. All was quiet, serene and starry. The scream was not repeated, and for an instant the solitary again strove to persuade himself that he had been deluded by his imagination. Sleep, however, had been scared for a season from his eyelids, and he sat listening to the loud beating of his own heart, and in anxious expectation of a repetition of the vision which had once before so much agitated him.

He was not mistaken. Within a very few minutes, which,

however, had appeared to be ages, there was a noise without as of a stealthy step. Blaxton sprang to the window again, and, as he did so, actually confronted the same mournful face, which had once before visited him at the dead of night. Exactly, as upon the previous occasion, the vision was of one very dear to him, who had been long laid in the grave. The beautiful face, with its deep prophetic eyes, was in startling proximity to his own, and looked in upon his midnight solitude with an expression of terror and of warning. He staggered backwards a few paces, overcome by the suddenness of the apparition. He recovered himself, however, very soon, by a powerful effort, but the face had already vanished from the window. He rushed from the house into the midnight air, and as he did so, he distinctly saw a figure gliding among the trees across his lawn. It seemed to bend its course towards the water's edge, and to pause when very near the beach. As it paused, Blaxton thought he heard a repetition of the scream which had at first alarmed him, but it was so much fainter as to be almost inaudible.

Impelled by an irresistible impulse, he followed unhesitatingly in the pathway of the mysterious figure, as it rapidly glided before him. After a moment's pause, however, at a particular spot upon the beach, the vision seemed suddenly to fade away. Whether it was a figure of flesh and blood, which had evaded his pursuit by a sudden retreat through the briery swamp, which bounded his domain upon the south-west, the hermit could not tell. In an instant, he had reached the spot where it had disappeared, but he could discover, however eagerly he strained his eyes in every direction, no further traces of its presence. While he stood agitated, and pondering upon the meaning of this second mysterious visitation, he suddenly heard a faint groan. It seemed to proceed from the ground, and almost from beneath his feet. He stooped to search in the dim starlight, and amid the rank grass, for the cause of this singular sound,

when to his astonishment and horror he became aware of the presence of a corpse lying seemingly stark and stiff almost at his feet.

There seemed now to be some cause for the various mysteries which had lately so perplexed him. Why he had been thus visited, and what was to be the result of these apparitions, he knew not, but he felt a vague terror taking possession of him, as he stood there in that midnight solitude, with that ghastly companion.

The phenomena of the heavens which had exerted so keen an influence upon his imagination, a short time before, he had in a measure interpreted. The vision of the aerial ships he had explained by the arrival of the Naumkeak colony soon afterwards; and now it seemed to him that the phantom sword had portended the scene of violence and bloodshed, which appeared so recently to have been enacted near his own threshold. His thoughts, which were wandering into infinite space, were, however, suddenly recalled to earth again, by a repetition of the groan. His sympathies were at once aroused, and bending over the prostrate form of Maudsley, he discovered, by the faint beating of his heart, that life was not wholly extinct. Without hesitating any longer, and exerting all his strength, he lifted the body from the ground, and bore it with difficulty to his cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

ENDICOTT AT NAUMKEAK.

MANY weeks had passed away. It was now early in November, and the hundred emigrants who, two months before had arrived with Governor Endicott in the good ship Abigail, were now established at Naumkeak. That narrow tongue of land, covered with thick forests up to that epoch, and tenanted only by the two or three scattered families, of whom those pages have already spoken, had already undergone a considerable change.

Walter Ludlow's solitary residence was now upon the skirts of a little village. It was, to be sure, a village of but a dozen thatched and mud-walled hovels, and had been constructed with great rapidity during the autumn, that the emigrants might have some refuge against the rigors of their first Massachusetts winter.

Although the coming winter had allowed, as yet, but few prognostics of its severity to be felt, although the climate still seemed tolerably mild, yet the sufferings of the settlers had already begun. The scurvy raged among them like a pestilence, fevers and inflammatory disorders, induced by low diet and exposure to a new and treacherous climate, had already assaulted almost every family, and in the immediate future the icy spectre of the approaching winter, the gaunt image of impending famine, rose before them, not like threatening phantoms, but as terrible realities.

In the centre of the little extemporaneous village, stood a mansion of much more considerable dimensions than the huts which surrounded it. A two-storied house, consisting of a skeleton of

timber-work, filled in with bricks, and having a projecting roof, which was covered with red tiles, was the most prominent object upon the clearing. The materials out of which this edifice had been constructed had been brought from Cape Ann.

Within the lower apartment of that dwelling were assembled several persons of grave and earnest appearance. A frugal mid-day meal had just been partaken of by the company, who were of both sexes, and a conversation upon serious and important matters had succeeded to the repast. At the upper end of the board sat a person of striking appearance; and yet he was neither handsome in countenance nor commanding in figure. The man was a little under middle age and a little above middle stature. He wore a Geneva skull-cap, a doublet of dark-colored serge, with a broad linen collar falling over it, and other habiliments of so grave a character, that he might have been easily taken for a clergyman, had it not been observed that his hand rested habitually and rather caressingly upon the iron handle of his long rapier, and had not the bold expression of his features and the restless glancing of his eye, forbidden the supposition. The lines of his face were stern and energetic, but somewhat harsh and heavy. The short grizzly locks, the heavy moustache and chin-beard of iron grey, the decided brow, the inflexible mouth, were all expressive of command. It was the physiognomy rather of a man of action, than of a profound thinker, and yet there was much in its character which was deliberate, earnest and imposing. Altogether, the whole appearance of the personage who sat at the head of that humble board, gave assurance of a man.

This was Captain John Endicott, the man who had been intrusted by the newly organized Massachusetts company with the command of the first emigration, and who had thus far wisely and resolutely conducted their affairs.

"You understand me then, thoroughly, Master Conant," said

he, addressing a grave and hardy looking personage who sat near him, who was the most prominent of the few brave and persevering settlers who had preceded Endicott's arrival at Naumkeak. "You understand my views, and that of the company whom I represent, entirely?"

"Truly, Master Endicott, I think we have at last arrived at a settlement of all disputes," replied Conant, "and I rejoice that all our differences are fairly healed."

"The company, which has been organized for a great and sacred purpose, is determined to send hither none but pious, orderly and energetic men," continued Endicott; "and to send no idle drones, neither to permit any such to remain within the limits of their patent."

"I believe you have effectually destroyed one nest of hornets," answered Conant, "by your late expedition across the bay."

"Aye, there needed but little deliberation to crush such a swarm of caterpillars," answered Endicott, "and I am truly beholden to our neighbors of Plymouth, and to their trusty captain, Master Standish, for his well executed capture of the master mischief-maker of that ungodly crew. How called you him, Master Conant?"

"Thomas Morton, sometime a pettifogger of Furnival's Inn," replied Conant, "and lately principal Master of Misrule at the place he has profanely denominated Merry-Mount."

"And which is henceforth to be denominated Mount Dagon," answered Endicott. "The vile reveller is disposed of, and the places that knew him shall know him no more. I have dispersed his infamous crew, and have cut down the idolatrous May-pole, with which he dared to profane this pure and sacred wilderness."

"Aye," said Conant, "it was almost your first deed in New England, and a worthy commencement of your career. The place was a den of infamy, and a rallying point for loose vagabonds and peace-breakers, for hundreds of miles around."

"I had a deeper motive even than the promotion of peace and order, by my immediate invasion of Mount Dagon," said Endicott. "I am now awaiting instructions from the company, touching many matters. I am, however, already enjoined to assume immediate possession of all the important points, particularly the maritime points, within the patent, and to expel, at once, all persons who are not instantaneously obedient to my authority. These orders I intend to execute, and promptly too," he concluded, slightly pounding the floor with his sword as he spoke.

"The expedition of the three Spragues is, I believe, already successful," said Conant.

"It is so," said Endicott. "It was all-important to occupy the peninsula of Mishawum, both from its natural advantages, and because it is the key to the whole portion of the territory claimed by a busy faction in England, which is adverse to the company. The three brothers have acted promptly. They found a solitary tenant upon the peninsula, a loose, depraved fellow, they tell me, Walford by name, and a blacksmith by trade. Do you chance to know him, Master Conant?"

"I know but little concerning him," was the reply; "a bold fellow enough, and a hardy pioneer, but restless, I believe, and uncomfortable, and more than all, a boon companion of Master Morton. What said he to the Spragues?"

"He said nothing to the Spragues," answered Endicott, "saving that the peninsula of Mishawum belonged to him, both by right of occupation, and by grant from the lawful possessors of the soil. He refused to acknowledge the authority of the Massachusetts Company, or to have any dealings whatever with us."

"He claims the peninsula of Mishawum under lease from one Oldham," said Walter Ludlow, who was present at the meeting, but who had not yet spoken.

"Oldham, Walford, Morton, and howsoever else they may

be called," answered Endicott, "are all but creatures of the Gorges family. 'T is a proud and powerful race, and their chief, or rather the most energetic among them, is Sir Ferdinando Gorges. He is known to have many agents scattered about in the wilderness, under assumed names, and please God, I intend to scatter them all to the four winds. For what said Moab unto the elders of Midian: 'This company shall lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.'"

"There may yet be trouble from the efforts of John Oldham, who hath so lately gone for England," resumed Roger Conant.

"Never fear, Master Conant," answered the governor, "the charter is as good as passed; but there is one measure now in contemplation, which is likely to assure the prosperity of the colony beyond all peradventure, and to place it entirely above all the efforts of its enemies."

"And what may that be?" asked several of the company in a breath.

"It is yet a profound secret in England," answered Endicott, "but I see no reason why it should be not confided to our discreet and trustworthy associates here. Know, then, that it is contemplated by many of the most eminent and most wealthy members of the Massachusetts Company in England, not only to embark a portion of their worldly goods in this adventure, but to do a far greater thing."

"And that is to visit the country in person, perhaps?" said Conant.

"Aye, to visit the country," answered Endicott, "and to leave their own forever. If the effort to obtain the charter be successful, of which I entertain not a doubt, the next move will be to obtain, either silently or explicitly, the royal permission to transplant that very charter to the wilderness. In case the right is obtained, a large number stand engaged to transplant themselves hither. The worthy Winthrop, of Suffolk, hath re-

solved, in this event, to convert his manor of Groton into money, and to embark with all his family and all his worldly goods for America. Many of the Lincolnshire folk have taken the same resolution."

"These be good tidings indeed," said Conant and others, "and I rejoice as unfeignedly as even you could do. Truly, when I first heard of the formation of the new company, my mind did much misgive me, whether we old planters might not be likely to suffer some injustice at their hands. Thanks to your upright and Christian conduct, however, Master Endicott, we have exchanged the spirits of heaviness for the garments of joy."

The conversation now turned on many local topics. The arrangements to be made by the company touching land allotments, ministers' support, and the beaver monopoly were discussed, upon all which points Endicott made satisfactory statements to the old planters.

"And pray, Master Governor," said a withered little old man, who sat near Roger Conant, "doth the company reserve to itself likewise a monopoly of tobacco?"

"No, Goodman Musselthwaite," answered Endicott, "although the company disapprove of the planting; firstly, because they do account it a pernicious weed, and secondly, because the profits upon it are likely to be but small; yet they are disposed to be indulgent in this respect to the old settlers, if tobacco planting be by them considered necessary to their proper sustenance and comfort."

"Aha! this is, indeed, generous and equitable," said Goodman Musselthwaite, whipping out a tobacco pipe as he spoke, which he proceeded very deliberately to light. "Tobacco, worthy Master Governor, is meat, drink, and feather-beds to us rusty old pioneers of the wilderness. Without tobacco, look ye, it is hard to be fat and comfortable, with one's head upon the same pillow with a wild cat's."

"Or with tobacco either," returned Endicott, looking gravely at the parched and shrivelled physiognomy of the old planter; "howbeit, the company hath determined to forbid the cultivation of the weed to all, save only the old planters. They are to be permitted to raise the vegetable for their own consumption and for exportation, but it is upon no account to be sold within the limits of the patent, being considered by the government of the company as contrary to good health and good morals."

"Truly, you surprise me, worthy Master Governor," ejaculated Goodman Musselthwaite, with a whiff of astonishment and tobacco smoke — "I regret to learn at this time and season, that my health and morals are in so perilous a condition, for I could find it easier in my heart to forswear board and lodging than my tobacco-pipe."

"Forgive me, Goodman Musselthwaite," returned Endicott, "I am enjoined to forbid the use of the weed to the new comers only, saving and excepting ancient men, and such others as may through illness occasionally require it."

"I hold that the company is wise in these regulations," replied Roger Conant, "and I am well pleased that you have been enjoined to have regard to the private morals and manners of the colonists, the rather that such things have necessarily been much neglected in this wilderness."

"Ye can assist me in many respects therein," answered Endicott. "Observe well the morals of those in your immediate neighborhood. See that no loose habits be tolerated for an instant. Govern all the sinfully inclined with a rod of iron. Smite them hip and thigh. Above all, tolerate no new-fangled heresies in religious matters. We have sought the wilderness to build up altars upon the true and only model. Demolish all other altars, should any such be raised."

"The company, then," said Walter Ludlow, "are not in-

clined, I perceive, to a toleration of the various forms of the Christian religion."

"May God, in his infinite mercy, forbid," thundered Endicott, indignant at the very idea of toleration. "I tell ye all that there is but one road to heaven, but ten thousand ones to hell. All they who live under my authority, please God, shall travel the right path. We have not undertaken this great business that we might erect a general haberdashery shop, where every canting coxcomb or fribbling madam might purchase a new fashioned religion every day to suit their sickly fancy. No, Master Ludlow; keep a strict watch upon the restive imaginations and frothy consciences of the novelty seekers. Cooper them up, and that roundly and soundly, my worthy friends, with the strong hoops of comfortable coercion. Otherwise, these effervescent and yeasty consciences will explode every day, to the manifest detriment of our infant commonwealth."

"And so I understand," said Ludlow, "that you hold by the Geneva creed, and that you are not inclined to recognise fellowship any longer with the Church of England."

"Most truly," replied Endicott, with continued sternness of manner, "and of all matters which do most move my spleen, Master Ludlow, the chief is that mischievous vice which men call toleration. No, no, my good friend, tolerate me no toleration. Put the noses of all recusants to the grindstone, and sharpen them, if you can, till they have a keener scent for the road which leadeth to heaven. If that will not serve their turn, why, even grind them off as soon as may be."

A general approval of these sentiments, so dogmatically laid down by the doughty governor, was manifested by a grave shaking of heads and wagging of beards, by his sad garmented, earnest looking companions.

CHAPTER X.

THE PESTILENCE.

THERE was a slight pause in the conversation, during which a person entered the room, and whispered to Endicott, and then to Esther Ludlow, who had been sitting all this time, listening in attentive silence to what was going forward. As soon as the person had communicated his message, she arose from her seat, and quietly left the room.

A shade passed over the stern brow of the governor, and his iron features seemed to be moved by a momentary convulsion. The emotion, however, whatever it was, seemed to be instantly suppressed, and he shortly afterwards resumed his conversation with his companions.

"Look ye, Master Conant, and you, Master Ludlow," said he, "these be blank register books, which, at the company's request, I propose shall be kept in every family of the colony. I purpose to appoint an overseer to each family, whose duty it shall be to keep an authentic history of each day's business. Idleness is the mother of mischief, Master Ludlow, and I mean that every hour of every day shall be chronicled, with the employment and the amount of work of each member of each family, from the father down to the youngest child. I purpose that every child born in the colony shall be brought up to some useful occupation, whereby he will be more likely to obey his spiritual instructors, and to walk in the way of the Lord. I intend, by means of these registers, that the governor and the council shall at any moment be able to read the lives and the characters of every man, woman or child, who live under their authority.

Thus shall the patriarchal days of the old world be restored, and sin, thus busily watched for, shall be scared out of our infant community."

So saying, the governor gravely distributed to Conant, Ludlow and to others, whom he had appointed overseers, the registers, in which the history of the little colony was thus minutely and daily to be recorded.

"I believe," continued he, "that the objects of our present meeting, which were duly to discuss all matters which might create difference between the old planters and the new, have at last been satisfactorily adjusted."

"Even so," answered Conant, "the company hath been wise and fortunate, both in their prudent resolutions, and in their selection of so discreet and upright an agent as Master Endicott."

"I furthermore propose," said the governor, "in view of this peaceful settlement of all difficulties, of this happy termination of all heart-burnings between the new comers and their predecessors, to baptize this spot of the wilderness by a new name. Nahumkeak is its present denomination, in the barbarous language of a barbarous people."

"So is it called," replied Walter Ludlow, "but I am inclined to believe that the term, even like these wandering tribes themselves, is of Hebrew origin. I am not altogether unskilled in that tongue, in which the blessed Scriptures were first promulgated, and I find there an apt and happy derivation for the word by which this wilderness spot hath hitherto been known."

"And what may that be, Master Ludlow?" asked the Governor.

"Nahumkeak," continued Ludlow, "deriveth plainly from two Hebrew words, which, being interpreted, signify the haven or the bosom of consolation, and a pleasanter or more prophetic designation than this, I could not desire for our new settlement."

"And so think I," said Roger Conant, "and I confess a desire to retain the term endeared to us by a long period of suffering."

"Nevertheless, I propose to change it," returned Endicott, in a somewhat peremptory and arbitrary manner, "and henceforth I propose that it shall be called the City of Salem, in memory of the covenant of peace, this day concluded between the new comers and the ancient planters. 'In Salem is my tabernacle, and in Zion is my dwelling-place, saith the Lord.'"

"Be it as you will," said Ludlow, "although I should be even as well contented to know my old resting-place by its old name."

"I could be as well content likewise," said Conant, "and do desire to have no hand in changing its appellation. Nevertheless, I say with Master Ludlow, be it as you will. Peace is, at least, happily established among us."

"And therefore shall it be commemorated by this new and sacred name," said the governor, "and so no more of these matters."

"Verily," said the withered little man, who had been puffing his pipe in solemn silence, during this long session, and whose voice now sounded like the boding raven's, "verily, I marvel that ye should discuss the prospects of this little colony so closely. The pestilence walketh among us by noon-day, and assuredly the ill-starred colony must perish speedily."

"I tell thee, man, that this colony shall never perish!" thundered Endicott, striking the ground fiercely with his sword, as he spoke. "No, although, as in Egypt of old, there be not a house where there is not one dead. No, let the pestilence stride among us, let the grave yawn and swallow us. Still shall this goodly work go on, for the finger of the Lord is in it. I fear not the savage, nor the winter, nor the pestilence, and under God, I have sworn to fulfil the sacred trust reposed in

me. I, even I, with the blessed Redeemer's help, will sustain this tottering load, and may this right arm be withered, bone, marrow, and muscle, if it doth not cheerily bear up the load imposed upon it, so long as this heart of mine beateth within my bosom."

The stern and choleric Puritan strode forth into the middle of the apartment, as he spoke, and looked around him with flashing eyes. His rude but impressive figure seemed to dilate into colossal proportions, as he stood in the centre of that earnest group, looking and speaking almost like an inspired prophet. Stern, sudden, choleric, but earnest, undaunted, untiring, he seemed more like Joshua, the son of Nun, rebuking his faltering followers, and invigorating them with his own overflowing inspiration, than like a mortal of earth's mould.

"What tell you me of famine, of pestilence, of danger?" he continued. "I tell you, man, that my people shrink not, for the Lord sustaineth them, and the road to heaven is no nearer from their fathers' graves, than from these frozen deserts. But should their hearts faint by the wayside, should they cry to me, even as the children of Israel cried unto Moses, saying, because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in this wilderness; even then do I feel that within me, which could lift them up from the sloughs of despair, and sustain their footsteps even till they reached the firm ground."

The withered little old planter, somewhat abashed by this burst of fierce enthusiasm, which his observation about the pestilence had elicited, seemed desirous of withdrawing himself from observation beneath the smoke-cloulds which he furiously emitted from his pipe. In the mean time Conant, looking respectfully towards the governor, observed,—

"Since the subject hath been mentioned, let me express my deep regret, that the worthy Dame Endicott should be, even now, dangerously ill with the fever, which hath made such havoc in the colony."

"Aye," replied Endicott, calmly, "the wife of my youth is stricken, I fear me she is sick even unto death, but God in his mercy may yet withdraw this cup of bitterness. Her sufferings are, at this moment, but light, and an angel from heaven, even now, is ministering at her bedside."

"What mean you, Master Endicott?" asked Conant, in some surprise, and as if he believed the governor's mind bewildered by the stern suppression of his natural emotion.

"I mean," said Endicott, speaking with some difficulty, for his voice seemed choked at times, in spite of his sternness, "I mean that her sufferings seem at the moment light, and that all which could be done by the gentle hand of woman, to alleviate pain, is rendered to her hourly by one who seemeth to me to walk among us more like an angel than a woman. I need scarcely add, Master Ludlow, that I speak of your sister."

The brother was already gone, but Brackenbury spoke,—"You may well say, Master Endicott, that she seemeth more like an angel than a woman, for it hath, truly, often seemed to me, that she must possess powers greater than human, to sustain herself amid the trials and the dangers to which she hourly exposes her life. Since this fearful pestilence first began to rage among us, she hath been untiring. Not a cold hearth but hath been warmed, not a starving family but hath been fed from her bounty, not a bedside at which she hath not ministered. Providence hath been more bountiful in worldly goods to Master Ludlow and his kindred, than to most of the indwellers of the wilderness, but Esther Ludlow holdeth her substance as a sacred trust from the Almighty, and dispenseth it accordingly."

"And may the blessings of those who were nigh to perish, descend upon her head!" said Endicott. "Who dares murmur, when this fair and feeble creature alone seemeth endowed with strength enough to sustain, upon her own shoulders, so heavy a burthen of suffering and sorrow? Were I to be struck down in

the midst of my followers, she alone, would be more than sufficient to uphold and to comfort the people, and with her own weak hand, directed by the Lord, to establish them beyond all peradventure in this goodly land."

The company now began to separate, each gravely saluting the governor as he departed. Endicott followed the last guest to the door of his dwelling-place, and walked forward a few steps upon the clearing. As he stood, musing and solitary, at a short distance from his door-step, a young man, who was one of the recently arrived colonists, saluted him.

"A shrewder atmosphere this, than the air of England, most worshipful governor," said he, with a certain flippancy of manner which jarred upon the ear of the stern Joshua of New England; "and a marvellously sickly climate I fear me. Marry, if this pestilence continue longer, I shall even leave the dead to bury their dead, and take shipping for England."

The governor suddenly turned upon his complaining follower, and his eye flashed with indignation as he spoke.

"Peace, Master Crowther," he cried, imperiously; "such peevish repinings vex me to the soul. I had hoped that the grain had been well winnowed and sifted before we took this goodly work in hand; but I find, to my sorrow, that there are still some grains of worthless chaff left in the bushel."

"If your worship meaneth to reproach me as being the chaff in the bushel," replied the young man, with increased pertness of demeanor, "I could be well contented to be cast unto the wind, so that it might blow me over the seas to merry England again. Marry, chaff or wheat, I have at least been well ground between the upper and nether millstones of famine and pestilence, like the rest of your misguided followers."

"Peace, babbler, I say!" thundered the governor, deeply incensed, both at the pusillanimity of his follower, of which he had been for some time aware, and of his disrespectful bearing.

"Think not that ye shall find let or hindrance from me. I will myself provide shipping for all the chicken-livered dullards whose cowardly stomachs yearn already for the fleshpots of Egypt."

"Beshrew me, most worshipful governor," said Crowther, "but it seemeth to me, that one who is so unlucky as to find himself, against his will, in the midst of tribulation and scurvy, might be at least spared such scurvy language. Why, pray thee, am I to be so sternly rebuked?"

"For three different reasons, young man," replied the sturdy governor, "each of which is enow to prevent all friendly converse between us two at this moment. First, because thy cowardly desertion of a good cause, into which thou rather forcedst thyself than wert chosen, hath moved my indignation. Secondly, because thy insolence, in the presence of thy magistrate, deserveth chastisement. Thirdly, because the very hair of thy head witnesseth against thee, and with its preposterous and womanish length, arouses my anger. Did not the holy apostles, long ago, forbid such sinful bedecking of the head? Know ye not that the longest hair hides ever the emptiest brain?"

"Marry, good Master Governor," said Crowther, somewhat provoked in his turn, at the rebuke thus roundly administered to him; "I am yet to learn that the Lord hath especially commissioned thee to superintend the decking of our outward man, or that any such authority hath been granted by the company. I understand thoroughly, however, thy aversion to long hair. Men say thou wert educated as a surgeon, a barber-surgeon, and doubtless thy fingers and scissors itch for the handling of our hair."

"For the cropping of thy ears, insolent whelp!" muttered Endicott, repressing by a strong effort his indignation at the increasing insolence of his companion.

"We have all our aversions, good Master Endicott," continued Crowther, with arms akimbo. "You cannot abide a head of flowing locks. For me, a grizzled moustachio is a nuisance, I cannot away with ——."

More had the flippant Crowther, perhaps, spoken in this vein, had not the choleric governor, inflamed beyond all bearing by this last sally, suddenly dealt him a swinging box on the ear. The young man, stunned as well as surprised by this unexpected buffet, which the governor did not vouchsafe to accompany with a single word of explanation, measured his length upon the grass. Upon recovering his consciousness and perpendicular position, he ventured to suggest, but in a marvellously discomfited and crest-fallen tone, that this was a kind of treatment to which he was unaccustomed, and which he considered thoroughly unbecoming upon the part of the chief magistrate of the colony.

"Get home, Master Malapert," thundered the governor in reply, cutting short all further remonstrances, "get home upon the instant, or I promise thee that within fifteen minutes shall a pair of stocks be constructed, and that thou shalt have the honor of sitting in them for the first time, and every day hereafter, until thou learnest a proper respect for thy superiors. Haddest thou tarried at Jericho till thine own beard was grown, thou wouldest have had less occasion to insult the grey hairs of thy elders, and the colony would have been well rid of a drone."

The governor concluded with a peremptory gesture, at which the discomfited Crowther sneaked away without any further observations. Endicott remained standing upon the spot for a few minutes, and began to rebuke himself severely. He was a man of quick temper, accustomed to military command, requiring implicit obedience, bigoted in his religious opinions, but of indomitable courage and great sagacity. Such a man of iron, rigid, unyielding, incisive character was, perhaps, the true

and only instrument by which the first foundations of the Puritan commonwealth could have been hewn out in that stern and rocky wilderness.

After rebuking himself, more perhaps than he deserved, for the excess into which his warm temper had carried him, his mind reverted to his wife, who had followed his fortunes with the unshrinking fortitude which distinguished so many Puritan matrons of that day, but whose tender frame was evidently sinking under her situation. He had watched by her couch with a tenderness such as could hardly have been looked for beneath that rigid exterior; and his labors had been alleviated, as we have seen, by the assiduity of Esther Ludlow. He returned pensively towards his home, and, with a slow step, ascended to the chamber where the sufferer lay.

It was a low, mean room, with one small window. The floor as well as the walls were of rough planks, and the scanty furniture, as well as the equipments of the humble couch where the dying woman reposed, were of the humblest description. The private apartment of that Puritan governor was not luxurious. It was almost squalid, although in the best and fairest house of the village, and looked more like the den of a starving pauper than the chamber of a magistrate. Some large logs were smouldering upon the hearth, which, as the only window was darkened by a cloak which had been pinned against it, diffused a dim and solemn light throughout the room.

Upon a rude block of wood, close by the pillow of the sufferer, sat Esther Ludlow, her eyes overflowing with silent tears. There sat that fair Puritan, over whose head there almost seemed a halo, a visible emblem consecrating the presence where all that is most gentle and heroic in woman, seemed embodied. Endicott entered the apartment noiselessly, and paused for an instant upon the threshold. A tear trickled down his iron cheek as he looked towards the rude pallet, where she, who had forsaken all to follow

him into that desert, now lay struggling with death. The mortal reward which she had reaped for her devotion, was a few months of sorrow, and a death in the wilderness. But to the exalted enthusiasm of Endicott, as confident in the shadowy compact which he had long since made with the ruling power of the universe, as in his agreements with his terrestial employers, a crown of glory seemed already descending upon her head.

Esther put her finger softly upon her lips, as soon as she was aware of his entrance, to indicate that the weary sufferer was asleep. He fell upon his knees in silent, fervent prayer. Life was still fluttering about the feeble heart of the victim. Motionless, upon outspread wings, the death-angel seemed to hover above her head, lingering, reluctant, as if his purpose had been changed by the mutely-appealing, protective form of Esther.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WARNING.

Late in that November afternoon, Esther Ludlow walked from the governor's house towards her own home. Dame Endicott still lingered, but in a hopeless and insensible state, and Esther, whose rude but commodious dwelling-place had for some weeks been converted into a hospital for the many exiles, whom the pestilence and famine had stricken, now bent her steps homewards to fulfil her duties there.

She had, herself, recently dispatched a messenger to Plymouth, who bore a letter from Endicott to Governor Bradford, praying that the services of the worthy and eminent Doctor Fuller, who had already rendered signal services, during similar afflictions in the older colony, might be extended to the suffering colonists of Naumkeak. In the mean time the whole superintendence of this hospital devolved upon her brother and herself.

The enthusiasm of Esther sustained her in these dark hours. She flitted among the suffering people like an angel of mercy, shedding blessings from her wings. She had at last found her sphere. The vision which had been displayed before her exalted imagination so long, seemed at last to change to reality. The foundation of that great religious asylum beyond the sea, seemed, at last, securely laid. Not appalled by the gloom which hung over the birth-day of the colony, not daunted by the dangers which rose like spectres along its course, she felt her heart beat high within her as she contemplated the sublime motives, the unwavering courage, of the leaders of the undertaking. She rejoiced that Providence had at last revealed to her a mode in

which she might prove, otherwise than in idle rhapsodies, her deep devotion to the cause which had led her and her brother into the wilderness. She rejoiced that her comparatively wealthy condition, and her habituation to the climate, enabled her to render essential services to those starving, perishing martyrs.

Charity, in marble or on canvass, is an attractive, adorable image, but the exercise of the virtue in reality, and in detail, is far less picturesque. Esther was true to her mission, which she felt had been intrusted to her by the hand of the Lord. She never faltered, she never repined, not a cloud obscured the brightness of her face, which diffused a radiance around the gloomy hovels where she was a daily visitant, and where to many a weary soul she seemed like one clad in the shining garments of a better world.

Yet she had sorrows of her own, and her heart was sad when she thought of Henry Maudsley. To her it seemed that they were hopelessly separated. She had not seen him, she had heard no tidings of him since that inexplicable interview in which he had heaped so many wild and incoherent reproaches upon her, and in which he had thrown around her neck the chain, of which he had possessed himself in so mysterious a manner. She supposed that he had already crossed the ocean, never to look upon her face again, and that he believed her fickle, deceitful, capricious. As she thought of this, as she thought how incapable he had proved himself of reading her soul, as she remembered the stinging words, more poisonous than adders', with which he had tortured her when last they met, her proud soul mounted, indignant and resentful, to a height from which she looked down with pity upon one so perverse and so misguided. And yet she could not but acknowledge, in her heart of hearts, that life had forever lost its brightness, and that a portion of her soul was withering never to blossom again.

Brooding over these melancholy thoughts, Esther strayed

pensively homewards. The twilight was gathering, and she had already left the last hovel behind her, which intervened between the little village and her own abode, when as she passed beneath the branches of the vast pine trees which skirted her own domain, she felt a sudden, but gentle touch upon the shoulder. She turned quickly around, feeling but slight alarm, for she supposed herself probably accosted by one of the settlers, when to her surprise she beheld a person whom she had certainly never seen before, and who, at least by that dim and uncertain light, seemed hardly human. A withered, leathern, apish, malicious face, lighted by two sparkling, toad-like eyes, a supple, lithe, baboon-like figure, whose restless and erratic movements seemed altogether involuntary, were the characteristics of the personage who now presented himself to her astonished eyes. As soon as this extraordinary creature found that he had attracted her attention, he suddenly threw a somerset high in the air, and alighting upon one leg, he thrust forth a carefully sealed packet in his brown and shriveled paw. As Esther, manifesting considerable repugnance and alarm, seemed reluctant to take the letter, and anxious to make her escape, the creature suddenly gibbered out, in a shrill voice, the name of Henry Maudsley. As the loved name struck her ear, Esther instinctively reached forth her hand and snatched the packet, whereupon the singular creature uttered a chuckling laugh, threw another somerset, and disappeared in the thicket. As soon as her strange companion, who was no other than Peter Cakebread, had taken his departure in this whimsical manner, Esther hastened to her own cottage, tore the seals from the mysterious packet, and read, by the light of a pine torch, the following lines:

"A fearful danger is impending over thee, Esther. Thine own hand only can avert the blow. One who hath no further claim upon thy heart, hath yet sworn to devote his life, if neces-

sary, to solve the mystery which envelopes at this moment thine own destiny and his. But all efforts will be fruitless, if these words do not alarm thee. I know, I deplore the infatuation which hath involved thy fate with the fortunes of a nameless adventurer. I bid thee most solemnly now, in this my farewell missive, to beware of him, -Shun him as thou wouldest perdition. Power or right to say more at this present, I have not. Within a few days, I purpose to take shipping for England, with but one purpose in view, to enable myself to solve my own doubts, and to arm myself with authority to tear off the garments which disguise a hypocrite, a villain, and a malefactor. Think not that wounded pride or petty jealousy dictate my course. No, Esther, thou wilt not judge me thus harshly. Were I doomed to perish at this hour, still, with my latest breath would I implore thee to break forever from the meshes which surround thee, before thy destruction be accomplished. One word more, and I have finished. To thy loyalty I trust that this communication may be buried in oblivion, and that no living being hear from thy lips of my existence, either in this wilderness or in the world.

HENRY MAUDSLEY."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PLOTS OF CAKEBREAD.

The solitude of Shawmut had not yet been invaded by any detachment from Endicott's colony. Although the brothers Sprague had already established themselves in the neighboring promontory of Mishawum, where, until their arrival, the burly blacksmith had dwelt in undisturbed repose, yet the hermit Blaxton still maintained himself upon his beautiful peninsula.

He had, however, for many weeks past had a companion. We have seen at what a critical moment he had found Henry Maudsley. The hermit's skill in pharmacy, aided by the vigorous constitution of the wounded youth, had at last frustrated the malice of Sir Christopher Gardiner. The knight, never doubting of his death, had been withheld by a feeling not natural to him, but which, for particular considerations, was an overpowering one in this case, from putting foot upon the peninsula. The corpse of his victim, lying unburied upon that solitary beach, was a sight from which he shrank. Although, at times, he felt disposed to summon up his old energy, and to laugh down his compunctious visitings, yet he was after all forced to submit to what seemed a decree of destiny. However much he essayed to conquer his repugnance, however important it had been at times for him to visit Blaxton, still would the spectre of the murdered Maudsley rise up before him, and scare him from his purpose. The reasons, which so excited his imagination, will be more fully developed hereafter.

Maudsley still lived, however, and after many struggling weeks, during which his life had been trembling daily and hourly in the balance, he had at last recovered.

It was a singular dispensation which had placed him in Blaxton's hands. Had this opportune succor been extended to him by any other person, the whole wilderness of New England would have rung with the strange adventure. As it was, no living soul but himself knew all the circumstances of the case. His antagonist believed him dead. The Ludlows believed him in England. Blaxton knew not, for he never inquired in what manner he had received so desperate a wound. This indifference in any other person would have been impossible, in the hermit it was perfectly natural. His extreme abstraction from all worldly interests, as well as a singular delicacy which instinctively forbade him from intruding upon Maudsley's confidence, had kept him not only silent, but perfectly incurious. During his patient's convalescence, he had peremptorily refused to listen to a disclosure, which he saw was offered with a secret unwillingness, and induced by a feeling of gratitude. The two companions were thus at once put at their ease, and the cause of Maudsley's involuntary intrusion upon the hermit's solitude, was never again alluded to during its continuance. Their discourse, when they did converse, was wholly upon other matters. The solitary's thoughts, as we know, were discursive, and seldom closely related to surrounding circumstances, so that during the protracted period of the wounded man's convalescence, they had ample opportunity to put many a girdle about the universe, but were never once in danger of descending to details which might perhaps have embarrassed Maudsley.

It was one of those exquisite but melancholy mornings which are sparingly sprinkled through the earlier half of a Massachusetts November. There was a thin, golden haze in the sky which the faint breathing of the south-west was not sufficiently powerful

to lift, the water of the western cove sparkled like silver, and the gently diversified amphitheatre of hills which surrounded it, was softened by that purple, cloud-like tinge which is so characteristic of Italian landscape, and which occasionally usurps the place of the vitreous and dazzling clearness which more peculiarly belongs to American scenery. The woods, with the exception of the oaks, where the shrivelled foliage still tenaciously clung, were leafless and desolate. Gaudy October, with her robes of a thousand dyes, had vanished, her glittering diadem lay crushed upon the ground, while sad November, like a grey, discrowned queen, with pensive brow and mourning weeds and melancholy pace, followed in the jocund footsteps of her departed sister.

The dark pines still lifted on high their fadeless plumes, but throughout the rest of the forest, no living leaf decorated the bare and skeleton tracery, save the yellow, starry blossoms of the witch-hazel, that mysterious plant which adorns its leafless sprays with golden flowers, just at the approach of winter, as if it loved to decorate the pale and lifeless corpse of nature.

Blaxton held a flowering twig of this weird and singular shrub in his hand, as he strolled that morning by his forest fountain, indulging in an erratic conversation with Henry Maudsley. Inspired by such an accidental circumstance as this, he could wander off into illimitable space, torturing the subject of his observation into a thousand similes.

"Observe these golden stars," said he to his companion, who looked abstractedly at the branch, but whose thoughts were far away, "are they not aptly clustered upon this wizard plant? 'T is fitting that the tree, whose every twig is a divining rod, able to guide the skilful seeker to mines of unsunned gold, should wear such golden stars. It wears them in winter, too, for are not the flowers which blossom in the mine, fadeless? Do they not smile at winter's impotent cold?"

"They are indeed pretty flowers," answered Maudsley, carelessly, for his thoughts were upon other matters; "I remember that you informed me of their importance in pharmacy, of their singular healing properties."

"And yet," continued the hermit, who had informed him of no such thing, but who, as usual, did not hear a syllable that was addressed to him, "and yet is there not a prophetic warning in this late blossoming? The divining tree puts forth its flowers when all the gladness of the green earth hath passed away, — even so do the golden flowers of wealth too often delay their unfolding till the hair of the seeker is grey, and his blood cold, and his heart as withered and leafless as this shivering forest which surrounds us now."

As he spoke, he broke off all the little twigs from the branch which he held, leaving only a bare and forked stick, the proper form of the divining rod. Then he began musingly to walk to and fro about the open glade near the fountain, holding the rod between the thumbs and fore-fingers of both hands, in an elevated position.

"The rod, as thou knowest, young stranger," continued the solitary, who had never yet inquired Maudsley's name and history, about which he was profoundly indifferent, "the rod serves as well to indicate the crystal veins of living water, which fill, like innocent milk, the maternal bosom of nature, as to direct the thirsty gold seeker in his feverish pursuit."

The hermit continued gravely pacing to and fro along the withered turf, holding his divining rod lightly in his hands, while Maudsley, lost in thought, scarcely attended to what was passing. At last, the rod which had obstinately maintained its elevated position, began slowly to turn in his fingers, and after a little while pointed directly down upon the earth beneath him.

"Were I a gold seeker now," said he, standing perfectly still, and looking contemptuously down upon the spot, to which the

divining rod pointed, "I should feel sure that this indication could not mislead. Thank God, however, I am not a money digger. In all the vagaries of my useless life, I never sought for gold. How melancholy, my friend, seems to a contemplative recluse, the pursuit of wealth. Unhappy the wretch who, holding ever a divining rod in his weary hands, pores still with bent shoulders and aching eyes upon the dark recesses where nature hides her gold, and never sees the blue sky above him, nor the bright sunshine, nor the gay flowers which blossom for rich and poor."

"T is strange," continued he half unconsciously, after a pause, "but the rod hath pointed almost exactly to the little cellarage where I have buried my iron box of papers. Perhaps Sir Christopher's documents which lie with them may be as golden as his visions." As the solitary thus soliloquized, he tossed away the twig. Maudsley had not heard his last remark, but finding his companion silent, was about speaking upon another subject, when the whimsical figure of Peter Cakebread suddenly presented itself.

That respectable and practical individual had evidently heard the hermit's concluding observations, and very gravely, secretly, and accurately, took note of the spot, which Blaxton had thus carelessly indicated. As soon as he had done so, he made a triumphant leap into the air, and stood for a moment upon his head, by way of announcing his arrival to Maudsley.

As soon as the hermit became aware of the presence of this personage, he turned upon his heel, sauntered away in search of his bull, and was a few minutes afterwards seen sweeping through the park at a headlong pace. Maudsley, in the meantime, eagerly accosted Cakebread, from whom he received not only an account of the safe delivery of his missive to Esther Ludlow but also a small parcel of papers, which the messenger took with a mysterious air from his bosom. A singular expression

passed over Maudsley's countenance as his eye fell upon these documents, and after a moment's apparent hesitation and reluctance he began eagerly to devour their contents.

The respectable Peter Cakebread, as we have omitted to inform the reader, had gone into the service of Sir Christopher Gardiner, after the lamentable overthrow and departure of his former master, the Lord of Merry-Mount. It will be, however, remembered, that he had received a certain memorable flagellation at the hands of the knight, which a person of his particular temperament was not likely to forget or forgive. He had, however, entirely dissembled his hatred, in order more fully to gratify it in the sequel, and he was accordingly very glad, upon the general breaking up of the establishment at Merry-Mount, to accept Sir Christopher's offer of employment.

It is unnecessary to state the details of the manner in which he was first presented to Maudsley's notice at Shawmut. Suffice that he had been bound to secrecy by the most cogent of arguments, and that the existence of Maudsley was still quite unknown, as well to Sir Christopher as to every other dweller in the wilderness.

Peter Cakebread, with the tendency to investigation which marked his character, had omitted no opportunity, at odd moments, thoroughly to search the house of Gardiner, and in so doing had discovered many papers which threw some light upon the private history of the man who had excited his curiosity as well as his deadly hatred. Although Gardiner had deposited with Blaxton, some months before this epoch, a large portion of his important papers and correspondence, yet there were enough remaining, which related more to his own personal matters, to excite if not to gratify the malicious curiosity of Cakebread. It may be judged with what satisfaction he had heard Blaxton's accidental remark, although he carefully avoided mentioning the matter at that moment to Maudsley. Now it chanced that the papers

already found seemed to bear some relation to the Maudsley family. Having been sent upon an errand to Blaxton, in consequence of the knight's repugnance to visit Shawmut, he had been accidentally brought into contact with Henry Maudsley, and had communicated to him a part of the information he had acquired.

Maudsley would naturally have shrunk with horror from a surreptitious examination of papers obtained thus by stealth, even from one who was his deadly foe. The name of Edith Maudsley upon one of the documents, however, happened to strike his eye at the first glance which he threw upon them. Thereafter, and for very sufficient reasons, he felt no restraint, but without the slightest compunction, was ready to plunge, by any means, into the very heart of the mystery. Still, however, he was doomed to be baffled, for the information which he gained was but fragmentary and unsatisfactory. He acquired a clue which led him to some distance and awakened some deep and decided suspicions, but still the affair remained perplexed, and the proof incomplete. It was necessary for him to visit England, immediately and secretly, to probe the matter to the bottom, and he waited his restoration to tolerable health and strength with great impatience.

He had, in the solitary perverseness of a jealous and wounded spirit, thoroughly wrought himself up to a belief in Esther's infatuation for the adventurous knight. He felt that she was lost to him, but his generous nature recoiled from the thought of permitting her to lose herself forever. But there were other and still more powerful cords which bound him and the knight in one destiny. At least his suspicions, founded upon something much stronger than surmise, were now added to the inexplicable sensations which the first sight of Sir Christopher had excited in his mind. As far as he knew, he had never met him in any other part of the world, and yet there was a mysterious feeling excited by his presence — a feeling like a dim reminiscence of a previous exist-

tence, for which he could not account, and which, he could not, by any effort, wholly banish from his imagination. Had he been acquainted with the connection of the knight with the Gorges family, he would probably have made much more rapid strides towards an elucidation of the mysteries, but it so happened that the documents, heretofore submitted to him, contained no mention of Sir Ferdinando, and related mostly to a period of time long past away. Later papers, which very probably might be in existence, had not yet been found by the diligent Cakebread.

Under a full view of the circumstances, therefore, Maudsley could do no more than write the enigmatical letter to Esther, previous to his departure to England. To him, henceforth, Esther was as nothing, but his own honor demanded a thorough investigation of the character of the person at whose hands, as he now believed, he had suffered more than one outrage, and whom, he hoped ere long, to punish as a felon, not as a rival.

Cakebread had informed him of the safe delivery of his mission to Esther, and there was now nothing more to detain him in New England. A small vessel was to depart the next day from Naumkeak, with a cargo of furs to the company in England, and in that vessel he had determined secretly to embark.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GRAVE-DIGGER.

All that day there had been a long, low, purple bank of clouds brooding along the south-western quarter of the horizon. In spite of the genial temperature of the atmosphere, and indeed in consequence of it, Maudsley, who had lived long enough in the climate to understand its character, knew that a storm, and probably a heavy snow-storm, was impending.

He had, however, taken leave of his hospitable and eccentric entertainer soon after the interview with Cakebread, which took place early in the forenoon, and, assisted by a favoring breeze, he had made a rapid passage to Naumkeak in Blaxton's little skiff, which Cakebread was to restore, upon the succeeding day, to its owner.

It was not his purpose to make his presence known, either to the Ludlows or to any other of the colonists, and he had already placed his effects on board the vessel which was to sail for England early the following day.

Late in the afternoon he wandered about the woods in the neighborhood of the little settlement, carefully avoiding the vicinity of the Ludlows' residence, and concealing himself from the observation of any casual wayfarer from the village.

The scene was bare and desolate. The short-lived glory of an Indian summer's morning had long since given place to the chill, leaden atmosphere of a winter's afternoon. The rising north-easterly wind sighed mournfully through the leafless forest. The withered leaves, eddying and whirling with every sudden gust, swept around him with a ghost-like sound. The dried

branches crackled beneath his foot. The waving branches of the pine trees sent forth a dirge-like sound, in which he seemed to hear the requiem of all his earthly hopes. The boding cry of a sable company of ravens, which were winging their way across the tree-tops, jarred upon his ear like a funereal wail. A few flakes of snow were already flitting through the gloomy atmosphere, which was pregnant with the coming tempest. All around him looked barren, desolate, and in gloomy unison with his own broken existence and withered hopes.

As if in mockery, it seemed that the example and the enthusiasm of Esther had begun to work their natural effect upon his impressionable temperament, just at the very moment when she seemed lost to him forever. Bitterly did he reproach himself now, for the wanton reproaches which he had so profusely dealt upon her faith, or, as he had then termed it, her fanaticism. Every idle word which he had uttered in his scornful moods, recurred to his fancy now with vivid distinctness. Each word seemed a scorpion whip, and memory an avenging fury; and yet it was all too late. Whence, he thought, except from some juggling fiend, could come these holy promptings, at a moment when every thing swam around him, and when his faith in every thing pure and holy was destroyed by the discovery of Esther's feebleness and falsehood. It was all a mockery. He beat down the rising feelings of religious faith, as he would have trampled upon a tempting demon.

Thoughts like these were whirling through his brain, as he moved now slowly, now rapidly, through the melancholy woods. At last, as he approached the verge of the irregular clearing, at the extremity of which the infant village was situated, he heard a dull sound, as of an iron instrument striking the frozen turf. He stepped forward in the direction whence the sound proceeded, and found a solitary individual digging a rude grave. He gazed upon the scene with a gloomy kind of satisfaction.

The snow was already falling thick and fast, the shades of evening were prematurely approaching, all nature seemed arrayed in gloom.

The grave-digger was a thin, feeble figure, and as he ever and anon laid aside his rusty pickaxe, and struck his arms to and fro across his breast, to arouse the warmth in his shivering frame, he looked almost like a shadowy creation of the fancy. As he resumed his labor again, there seemed something in his countenance familiar to Maudsley, who presently recollected the features of Faint-not Mellowes, the Suffolkshire weaver and pilgrim from New Plymouth, whom, as has appeared in the earlier pages of this history, he had once rescued from the ruffianly hands of the Merry-Mount crew.

His gloomy task required no little labor, for his arms were weak and the earth was rigidly frost-bound. It seemed that the inhospitable wilderness, which had greeted those early pilgrims with so cold a welcome, and inflicted upon them so many fearful sufferings, would almost deny to their dead a resting-place in its bosom. It was a melancholy scene, in which, at that moment, Maudsley and the grave-digger were the only actors. They stood at the edge of a clearing of some twenty acres, at the opposite extremity of which were huddled together the few miserable mud-walled and coarsely thatched hovels, which, with the "fair house" of the governor, constituted the village of Naumkeak. A thin wreath of smoke rose above the forest a little beyond the farthest house, indicating to Maudsley the hidden residence of her who was all the world to him, and who yet was lost to him forever.

The ground immediately around him was rough and broken. Vast, blackened stumps, looking like the tomb-stones of the forest patriarchs, who had flourished there for centuries, encumbered the soil, and among them were thickly strewn the many recent and rudely finished graves, where the stricken

settlers, day after day, ever since their arrival in that desert, had come to deposit their dead.

There, in their wild resting-places, hastily and scantily hidden from the prowling wolf, slept those early victims, those obscure but unforgotten martyrs. The soil of the wilderness was already hallowed ground, and if England contained the ashes of their forefathers, New England already held the green graves of those who had been nearer and dearer to them.

Maudsley looked on for a few moments in silence, and then stepping forward, he gently saluted the grave-digger,—

"'T is sorry weather, Goodman Mellowes, for so melancholy a task as that which occupies you," said he, "and your strength seems hardly sufficient to accomplish it."

Mellowes desisted from his labor, and stared, with marks of great surprise, at the individual who thus suddenly addressed him.

"Verily, verily," said he at last, "thou hast caused me to drink of the wine of astonishment. Lo! is it not Master Maudsley who saluteth me?"

"Most truly," answered Maudsley, "but in what respect is my appearance so astounding?"

"Verily, I did opine that you had long since returned to the flesh-pots of Egypt," answered Faint-not — "and yet do you now present yourself to me thus suddenly in fleshly garb, but pale and haggard, and rather resembling a visitant from the land of spirits than the stalwart youth whom I do remember some months ago."

"I have been indisposed of late to be sure," answered Maudsley, "but I hardly thought that I wore such a death's head upon my shoulders, that even the Naumkeak grave-digger would shrink from my society. But be of good heart, my worthy friend, I am neither ghost nor goblin, and furthermore, rest assured that you at least shall not have the task, which seems no

trifling one, of digging a grave for me in this wilderness, inasmuch as I purpose to effect my retreat before that last friendly office shall be necessary."

"Alas! worthy master," replied the weaver, "I regret that thy heart hath not been regenerated, that thou mightest know how sweet is the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in a justified person. But while I am prating thus, my work languisheth; lo, I am forgetful."

So saying, the grave digger again applied himself to his task.

"My friend," said Maudsley, after looking compassionately at the feeble Faint-not's painful efforts, "let me prove to you that my frame is not so exhausted as you think. Give me your instrument, and with your permission, I will even assist you in hollowing out this trench. A grave in this wilderness will be a quiet resting-place enow, even if an unregenerate hand hath helped to dig it."

Notwithstanding the remonstrances of Goodman Mellowes, who was, however, nearly fatigued and not unwilling to be relieved of a portion of his labor, Maudsley took the spade and pick-axe, and steadily set himself to his voluntary task. There was a nameless instinct which impelled him to the work, besides a simple and good natured desire to lighten the load of the weary Mellowes.

"I regret, worthy master," said the weaver, continuing his conversation, as he stood upon the outside of the grave and occasionally directed the labor of his companion — "I regret, in very sooth, that thy heart is, as thou callest it, still unregenerate. I do remember me full well, how, and where, and at what very moment, the Lord was graciously pleased to reveal himself to me. It was of an October evening, five years now past and gone, that, at three quarters past nine of the clock, during a smart shower of rain, even as I was taking a pipe of tobacco in

the kitchen of my cottage in Great Brixsted, in Suffolk, my wife and children being then all soundly asleep, the Holy Ghost was suddenly pleased to descend upon me, whereupon I ——"

"I pray thee, Goodman Mellowes," said Maudsley, purposely cutting short the worthy but somewhat prosy weaver's history of his religious experience, to which, at that particular moment, he felt no inclination to listen,—"I pray thee, hast thou really abandoned Plymouth and established thyself permanently at Naumkeak?"

"Truly, I have," was the reply, "although many months ago, I did, as thou knowest, purpose to bring my children and wife even back to New Plymouth."

"I recollect," replied Maudsley, still busily pursuing his task, "but why did you change your mind?"

"Owing, as I would humbly and with reverence believe," answered Faint-not, "to a special interposition of Providence, who deigned, in my poor behalf, to visit me corporeally, wearing the form of a mortal female, but who seemeth rather to my apprehension, as one wearing the garments of light."

"Indeed!" said Maudsley abstractedly, and paying but little attention to the enigmatical observation of his companion.

"Aye," continued the other, "although Mistress Esther Ludlow was habited in fleshly garments ——"

Maudsley started as the name struck his ear, and he was upon the point of springing from the grave. He checked himself, however, by a sudden impulse, and before his emotion was observed by his companion, who gravely continued,—

"Although she was habited in the garments of earth, yet did never a tabernacle of flesh contain a more precious jewel. She hath been, as one might say, the guardian angel, under Providence, of this little settlement."

"And you say," continued Maudsley in a husky tone, "that she was the cause of your change of residence."

"Verily yes," said Mellows, "for besides, that I was never wholly and blindly given to the tenets of the New Plymouth church, which, to my poor apprehension, savor more of strict and absolute separation than ——"

"I understand you," said Maudsley impatiently, "but what of Esther Ludlow?"

"My wife was dying, my children were sorely ill, and almost famishing — I was homeless, and we were all nigh unto perish. But the house wherein I now dwell, and which, though lowly, is not inferior to any except the mansion of the governor, I owe to the generosity of that virtuous maiden, who, moreover, did minister unto my helpmeet when she was sorely stricken. The same wise and charitable virgin, moreover, did pour out upon our hearts the oil of Christian sympathy, when the Lord did take away, one after another, all our blessed babes."

"Indeed," said Maudsley, affected by the uncouth but sincerely grateful language, with which the devout weaver acknowledged his obligation to Esther, "have you been then so unfortunate as to be left wholly childless?"

"Truly, the Lord gave them to me, and he hath taken them away," answered Faint-not. "I felt poor enough when they asked me for bread, and I had naught to give unto them but a stone. But they are dead now, Master Maudsley, and I feel none the richer."

Maudsley addressed a few common-place words of consolation to his companion, steadily, the meanwhile, pursuing his work, at which he had been so diligent, that the grave was now nearly finished.

"A little more hollowed at the edges, I pray thee," said Goodman Mellowes, indicating to Maudsley, with considerable pedantry of manner, the mode in which the bottom of the grave should be finished. "Ah, I have some little skill at the business, albeit I was, by trade, a weaver, and have also, in the wilderness, performed the functions of goatsherd.

"Truly, the shades of evening are approaching," continued he, in a brisker tone, "and it is time that she should be brought hither. Her grave is ready now. Alas! poor Esther Ludlow!"

Maudsley sprang from the grave as if he had heard the archangel's trumpet. An indefinite, icy feeling, had withheld him from questioning his companion as to the health and present condition of Esther. He thought, if she had been ill or suffering, that the garrulous grave-digger would probably have enlightened him on the matter, and yet he feared to hazard a direct question.

At the last words uttered by Mellowes, a sudden light seemed to flash upon him, and it seemed to him, that he had now, blindly obeying the instigations of a fiend, actually come hither, upon the night before his departure from New England, to dig, with his own hands, the grave of his beloved.

He confronted the grave-digger with a countenance of ashy paleness.

"Tell me," he cried, in a voice which was choked to a whisper, and which was yet distinctly and fearfully audible, "is this the grave of Esther Ludlow?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the weaver, who believed that his eccentric companion had lost his wits. "This grave is intended for Dame Endicott, the spouse of the worthy governor. Esther Ludlow, God be praised, is alive and well."

Maudsley staggered backward, almost insensible, and sank for a moment upon the ground. His frame enfeebled by long illness, and his mind exhausted by emotion, had both lost much of their elasticity. He found time to recover himself, however, as his companion continued, —

"Dame Endicott hath passed away, the virtuous spouse of the worthy govèrnor of this colony. In my mention of the name of Mistress Ludlow, I did but compassionate the unavailing exertions of that pious virgin, to arrest the heavy blow which hath

fallen upon this worthy family. But stay, they are bringing the corpse hitherward," continued he, looking towards the settlement; "yonder come the mourners, the worthy governor and his friends, attended by Master Ludlow and his virtuous sister."

Maudsley recovered his composure at once. He had come hither, determined to avoid all communication with any of the settlers, most of all, with the Ludlows. He was unwilling to meet the melancholy company, which was already slowly picking its way across the rugged clearing towards the rude burial-place. He accordingly gave a few hurried directions to Mellowes, earnestly forbidding him to mention their interview, or even to hint that he was still in the country. Upon parting, he presented the weaver with a considerable sum of money which he had about him, and for which, as he was to leave upon the next day for England, he had no further occasion. Instead, however, of leaving the neighborhood, he concealed himself beneath the foliage of a white-pine tree, which grew in the immediate vicinity of the grave, and calmly awaited the arrival of the corpse. Since fate had so willed it, he was even willing to look once more upon the face of Esther, although he had not purposed it, and till that moment could not have believed himself possessed of the necessary courage.

While he was thus establishing himself in a position where he could see without being seen, the company had reached the spot. Four men bore the coffin, which had been hastily and rudely fashioned of rough boards, and gently deposited it in the grave which Maudsley's hands had dug. But a few other persons were present, besides the bereaved Endicott, Walter Ludlow, and his sister.

The snow was falling fast. Ludlow offered up a fervent, extemporaneous prayer, but the services were necessarily hurried, for the storm was rapidly increasing. As the last words of the prayer were spoken, the grave-digger threw the

first spadeful of hard and frozen clods upon the coffin. The stern visage of the governor was convulsed by the harsh and rigid sound, and a single tear ran down his iron cheek. He commanded himself, however, and stood, an image of simple and pathetic dignity, erect, uncovered, offering up a silent prayer for support in that hour, but unbowed by the misfortunes and the difficulties which were thickening around him.

"It was not my design," said he, in a calm voice, "that she should accompany me in our first voyage to this inhospitable wilderness. I would have urged her to tarry at the house of her kinsman Cradock, until the rough places had been smoothed for her feeble footsteps, but she would not be gainsayed."

As Endicott paused, overcome for an instant by his emotion, Maudsley at last heard the gentle voice of Esther, which fell upon his ear like music, although he could not accurately understand the words of consolation which she addressed to the mourner, in a low and murmuring tone.

As Esther ceased speaking, the company slowly left the spot, the governor remaining a little after the rest, and then walking homewards with unfaltering step.

When they had all departed, Maudsley stole forth, and stood for a moment by that lonely grave.

He had been so near to Esther, during the whole ceremony, that her robe had been waved against him by the wind; he had looked upon her face, he had listened to her voice; and now that she was gone, and that he stood alone upon that desolate spot, his heart seemed to be dead within him.

Upon what slender threads hang the destiny of blind and erring mortals! A few simple words might have been exchanged between the grave-digger and himself, which would have swept forever the delusions from his brain, and restored happiness to his stormy soul. Twenty words which might have been spoken, instead of the wandering discourse which had really occurred

between them, and much of the mystery might have been dispelled forever, which now seemed to envelope his fate. But the words were not spoken, and a wintry sea soon rolled between the lovers.

Maudsley had carefully observed the exact place where Esther had stood, and he now knelt down and passionately kissed the print which her foot had left upon the snow, with which the earth was already covered. A wreath of the lowly, trailing evergreen grew upon that spot of ground. He tore off a little twig, and placed it carefully in his bosom. He then stood till the rapidly descending flakes had obliterated every vestige of Esther's presence, and then he left the place.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE FALCON'S LAST FLIGHT.

On a bright morning in September, 1630, Sir Christopher Gardiner and Thomas Morton sat together in a small apartment of the Merry-Mount palace.

More than eighteen months had elapsed since the events which have been last related, but although the political aspect of affairs had much altered during that interval, the relative position, and the individual fortunes of the principal personages who have figured in these pages, had not yet been materially changed.

Morton, against whom nothing of importance had been found in England to warrant his detention, or to justify any interfer-fence with his rights as an Englishman, aided, moreover, by the intervention of influential friends, had returned to New England during the past year, in company with Isaac Allerton, the confidential agent and leading financier of the Plymouth colony, who brought him out from England in the capacity of secretary. The banishment which had been inflicted upon him accordingly proved but temporary, and upon his return, he had forthwith established himself at what the Puritans called his "old nest at Merry-Mount."

The number of his retainers or subjects, as he facetiously called them, had, however, very much diminished during his absence, and, with the exception of the faithful Bootefish, the Canary Bird, and one or two stragglers who dwelt in the adjacent huts, the merry potentate now reigned in solitary grandeur. Peter Cakebread still remained in the employment of Sir Christopher Gardiner, who had himself been absent from the

neighborhood of Massachusetts, no human being knew where or wherefore, and who had returned to his old haunt, still accompanied by the mysterious Jaspar, whom he called his cousin, a short time previous to the period at which this chapter opens.

The room in which they sat was Morton's sanctum. The rude rafters were adorned with trophies of the chase, with Indian weapons, and with countless implements for fishing, hunting and hawking. A broken-winged eagle, partly tamed and wholly melancholy in his deportment, hopped disconsolately about the floor, presenting a pathetic emblem of deposed and degraded majesty, but occasionally displaying in his hoarse and indignant scream, and the furious blows of his remaining pinion, that the wings of his spirit at least were not yet wholly broken. Upon a rough table, stood a flask of some very transparent fluid, two or three pewter mugs, and a much thumbed copy of Horace, bound in vellum; but by far the most interesting objects in the room, were two hawks, which stood upon their perches, one very near the head of Morton's couch, and the other a little farther removed.

Morton, who was certainly the very first, and probably the very last, person in Massachusetts who ever indulged in the graceful diversion of hawking, was an adept in that art, which was at that moment in the zenith of its glory in Europe, although, in consequence of the improvements of fire-arms, it fell, before the close of the century, into total disuse.

He was at that moment, while conversing with Sir Christopher, busily employed in preparing a couple of feathers or flags, as he technically called them, which were to be imped or inserted into the wing of one of his favorite hawks, who had sustained some trifling damage during his most recent exploits.

"And so you tell me," said he, continuing the conversation which had commenced some half an hour before, "that you

have never visited Shawmut, since the catastrophe to which you allude?"

"Never," answered the knight, with a gloomy expression, "and by heaven! it seems as if an evil demon dwelt in that lonely spot, into whose clutches I must be delivered soul and body, should I dare to enter his accursed circle."

"'T is strange," said Morton, holding up the point of his feather to the light, and examining it with critical nicety, "and yet you tell me that it was a fair and legitimate duello, and that Peter Cakebread officiated afterwards as sexton, and inhumed the body as decorously as circumstances allowed?"

Gardiner made a slight gesture of assent, but remained in dark and frowning silence.

"Poor Harry Maudsley!" continued Morton, in a voice of unaffected sorrow, "an unlucky chance sent him to this wilderness. Poor fellow! I had a sincere sympathy with him. He was the only human creature whom I ever met with in this pagan wilderness, who had a real appreciation for the polished strains of Flaccus. I would to heaven he had remained at home, where, as I have been informed, his connections were highly respectable. Hadst thou ever any acquaintance with others of the Maudsley family, Sir Kit?" concluded he carelessly.

"No more of this!" cried Gardiner, with sudden and passionate emphasis, — "no more of the stripling! Alive, he wilfully crossed my path till I crushed him against my will. Dead, he haunts me like a curse. No more of this, I say!"

The knight sprang to his feet, and strode impatiently about the narrow apartment, with the supple, muscular restlessness of a caged tiger. At last he flung himself upon a seat again, and said in an altered tone, and with assumed tranquillity, —

"The lunatic Blaxton dwells still upon his peninsula, and still alone, I think you tell me."

"Aye," answered Morton, observing, without comment, the

singular agitation of his companion, "unless he hath removed since the beginning of the week, which is not likely. Still I think he shows signs of great impatience since the arrival of Winthrop's colony at Charlestown, as the Mishawum promontory, it seems, must now be designated."

"And Walford has not yet been forced from his dwelling-place?"

"Not yet," answered Morton, laying his feathers carefully upon the table, and walking round the chamber in search of some implement, which seemed to have been mislaid; "Walford still remains, but, by Jupiter, he hath met with but churlish treatment from the psalm-singers, who have taken such forcible possession of Canaan. I fear he will soon abandon the place in disgust."

"He shall not go yet, by Saint John," replied the knight, "I will not be fooled any longer thus. As for John Oldham, ——"

"Exactly," interrupted Morton, "John Oldham, who is my very good friend and gossip now, having been, as you know, appointed by the Plymouth brethren to be my jailor; John Oldham, who was thoroughly instructed by me touching the legality of his own lease, and of the Gorges patent in general, hath brought all the influence he could to bear against the Massachusetts company, but I am satisfied now that it is to be unsuccessful."

"By heavens!" said the knight, impatiently, "they shall yet be overturned root and branches. If Sir Ferdinando had been ruled by my counsels, all this business would have never happened, this whole territory would, at this moment, have been in his undisputed possession, and I should have been Governor-General of New England. But it is not too late yet, and the knight is already awaking from his folly."

"With submission to your better judgment, Sir Kit," answered Morton, who, with characteristic philosophy, had already

begun to look upon the prostrate position of his airy castles, with something of a child's indifference, at the destruction of his card palace, so soon as the first ebullition of spleen is over, and who now seemed exceedingly interested in the amusement for which he was industriously preparing, "I very much fear that the right worshipful Sir Ferdinando hath grown marvellously lukewarm in the matter. He hath wasted so much gold in this business, that he hath begun to draw his purse-string very tightly. Your vigorous demand for men and money somewhat appalled him two years ago."

"He is no such niggardly coward, I tell you, Morton," replied Gardiner, peremptorily. "His letters still speak warmly and encouragingly."

"Perhaps so," answered Morton, "but it is still my opinion that Sir Ferdinando's zeal hath very much abated of late. Since the last triumph which the Puritans achieved in obtaining so suddenly and secretly the transfer of the charter itself into New England, our friends have been very much disheartened, and look, I fear, upon our enterprise as hopeless. So many people of wealth and station, both among those who have emigrated, and those who remain in England to assist the colony, make their party very strong."

"By heaven, his zeal shall not cool, while I have a voice to warn him," cried Gardiner, angrily.

"Well, well," said Morton, carelessly, "thou mayest be in the right after all, — '*Nil mortalibus arduum*,' — but I own that things are looking slightly complicated. Here, Ajax! come here, my old hero!" With this Morton whistled in a peculiar note to one of his hawks.

There were two of these birds stationed upon their perches in the room. Of these, the one which was nearest the bedside, was hooded and belled, having not yet been so thoroughly trained as his companion. It was a large peregrine falcon,

the bird which, after the ger falcon, which is unknown in Massachusetts, was most esteemed for his strength, docility, and audacity. Being a haggard, that is to say, a bird who had been taken after he was full grown, and had accordingly hunted upon his own account, he had been more difficult to reclaim and man, although, under the skilful tuition of Morton, he was already admirably and almost perfectly trained. As, however, he still retained a little of his native wildness, Morton kept his perch near his bedside, that he might constantly call to him and arouse him frequently during the night, so that he might never forget the sound of his voice or the habit of obedience. He was also, unlike his companion, not allowed to use his eyes when at home, and as he stood there reposing upon his perch, with his leathern hood, surmounted by an artificial crest of plumes, drawn closely over his head, through which only his curved and martial beak was allowed to protrude, with his wings hanging motionless at his side, exposing to view his broad chest, whose lighter-colored feathers were plaited closely upon each other like a shirt of mail, with his sinewy legs terminated by immense yellow pounces and long golden spurs, he presented a fanciful resemblance to some fierce warrior monk, brooding in slothful and gloomy captivity.

The other bird, a little larger in size than the falcon, was a goshawk, who sat quietly but unhooded upon her perch, glancing restlessly at every thing around her, with her large hazel eye. Being an "eyess," that is to say, a bird whom Morton had taken from the nest, and brought up in natural tameness, she was as obedient to her master's voice as the best trained spaniel, and as thoroughly accomplished a creature as could have been found, at that moment, in either hemisphere. The bird's eye flashed quickly, as she heard her master's whistle, and fluttering directly from her perch, she settled upon Morton's fist. The sportsman fondled the noble creature, stroked her

back caressingly with his hand, and gave her a few bits of meat, from the scattered fragments of his own breakfast, which still remained upon the table.

"'T is a gallant hawk, by St. John," said Gardiner, looking at the bird with admiration, "and fit for an emperor."

"Pardon me, Sir Christopher, not for an emperor," said Morton; "and although I know you skilled in the generous craft, yet I find you not so conversant as a knight of your degree should be, with the scale of precedence among falcons. An eagle is for an emperor, a ger falcon for a king, a peregrine falcon for an earl ——"

"For an earl!" cried Gardiner; "and what do you then with yonder fellow in the leathern night-cap, for he is a peregrine if I know a hawk from a ——"

"From a hernshaw, as the immortal swan of Avon hath it," interrupted Morton; "but you forget that when thou art Prince Palatine of Massachusetts, I am to be Earl of Merry-Mount. In the mean time I have even solaced myself with manning and reclaiming yonder fellow, who, from as wild a haggard as ever preyed upon crows and pigeons, is now as well bred a falcon as ever flew."

"And what is a simple knight to do for a hawk?" said Gardiner, humoring his companion, who loved nothing better than to indulge the quaint vein of pedantry, which, upon all sporting topics, so particularly characterized his mind; "what is a poor errant knight to do for a hawk, if the great dignitaries have thus monopolized the varieties?"

"Marry, the sacret is for a knight," answered Morton, "and the devil a one is to be found in New England."

"Then the knight must even content himself with the goshawk," answered Gardiner, "and if there be many like that fellow upon your fist there, I could even content myself with the exchange."

"So the bird hath been injured?" continued Gardiner, looking with a sportsman's interest at the wing which Morton had now opened, and in which he was inserting the two feathers which he had prepared in a most artistic manner to replace two which had been broken from the pinion.

"Slightly," answered Morton; "but there, my trusty warrior, thy wing is imped, and thou art whole again, off to thy perch." As Morton spoke, the obedient bird fluttered to his station again, where he remained as motionless as before.

"Let me now entreat your attention," said Sir Christopher, with much earnestness. "As you value my friendship, and the fulfilment of your ambitious hopes, beware of prematurely offending these Puritans of Massachusetts, as thou hast done those of Plymouth."

"Marry, Sir Christopher, I am schooled," answered Morton; "but touching my ambitious hopes, their wings have been marvellously clipped of late, and indeed, I have received some warnings of a contemplated invasion of my dominion, under the auspices of the great Joshua himself."

"And who in the devil's name is the great Joshua?" demanded Gardiner.

"The great Joshua Temperwell, — heaven save the mark, — know you not the great Joshua?" replied Morton. "Who should he be but the great governor of the Puritans, the man who hath borne out into the wilderness the ark of the covenant, videlicet, the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company, who should it be but the great King Winthrop, John the first, Dei Gratia?"

"And do you mean that you have been threatened with an attack on the part of Winthrop?" asked Gardiner impatiently.

"Even so," was the reply; "they hold solemn courts over at Mishawum yonder, in a lumbering tenement which they call the great house, where they wag their grizzled beards in each others' faces, and ponder unutterable things, with all the gravity of

owls. I have a shrewd notion that they mean to cite me before their august tribunal, although what crime I have committed I have not yet discovered."

"They will not dare to do so, by heaven!" cried Sir Christopher; "the rebuff which the accusations brought against you by the Plymouth brethren met with must have taught them wisdom."

"I know not. These same brethren are never taught wisdom," answered Morton, "seeing that they are all born into the world as wise as serpents, if not as harmless as doves."

As he spoke, Morton shouted to his attendant Bootefish, —

"Come hither, thou prelate, thou grave and reverend dignitary," he cried, "and attend us in our sports. Although the canons of the church most expressly forbid hawking to the clergy, and thou art in training for a bishop, yet we well know that the clergy have been devoted to the amusement from time immemorial, and despite the prohibition. Perhaps 't is not the only forbidden pleasure which holy men have permitted themselves. Now, Sir Kit, if thou wilt descend to the marshes, thou shalt see how a New England hawk can fly."

"I am here, your worship," answered Bootefish, presenting his rubicund visage at the doorway.

"Bring us then the poles and the game-bags, most reverend bishop, and hold thyself in readiness to take charge of my hawks when our sport is over. The Bishop of Ely, in bluff King Henry's day, excommunicated seven persons who stole his falcon. Do thou not only excommunicate, but flagellate any living man, be he pagan or Puritan, who should dare to meddle with my hawks."

So speaking, Morton, who had already hooded Gaunt, now proceeded to hood and bell Ajax, and taking the haggard upon his own fist, he brought the other to Sir Christopher, saying, —

"Although I kept Gaunt in Tom Walford's smithy for ten days, to tame him with the sound of the hammering, yet is he

not yet manned enough to sit upon other fist than my own. Therefore you will even take Ajax, and a better goshawk never flew a flight."

"Willingly," answered Gardiner, "but to tell you the truth, I marvel at your nomenclature. Both these hawks being female, as they should be, the female of all falcons being the fiercest and strongest, 't is strange you should thus accommodate them with names of the other gender."

"Thou art right," answered Morton, "and 't is a humor of mine own. The only matter in the noble craft of hawking which mislikes me, is this very unsexing of the species Sooth to say, I never saw a tercel gentle, in company with his ferocious spouse, who was, sans compliment, his better half, without offering up a silent thanksgiving, that among my other misfortunes, that of matrimony hath not yet befallen me. Such unequal and uncomfortable matches are sometimes the lot even of the lords of creation. What think you of the institution of matrimony in general, Sir Kit, both as regards the genus falco and the genus homo?"

The countenance of Gardiner looked ferocious and forbidding again, as Morton, who seemed peculiarly unlucky in his allusions that morning, made this careless query. He answered nothing, however, and the Lord of Merry-Mount, not observing his companion's mood, continued, —

"'T is for this reason," he said, "that I choose, thus arbitrarily, to designate my favorites. I choose not to associate any thing ferocious with the female idea, which, to my mind, should never awaken any images but the gentlest and most caressing. And accordingly, if ——"

"Doth the pestilence still continue in the bey, among the settlers at Naumkeak and Charlestown?" said Gardiner, abruptly changing the conversation.

"Yes, the poor devils are undergoing a severe seasoning," answered Morton, leading the way out of the palace, followed by Gardiner and Bootefish — "They are dying very fast of the scurvy and fever. No people but Puritans could bear such peppering, but they are a generation apart, I believe, and would live through all the plagues of Egypt."

"And I suppose they have poor medical attendance, and a scanty supply of drugs," said Gardiner, who seemed to take a particular pleasure in dwelling upon the sufferings of the settlers.

"Why, as to that," answered Morton, "they have the illustrious Doctor Noddy, the great soul-saver, and body-snatcher of New Plymouth."

"And who and what may the illustrious Noddy be?" said Gardiner, "preacher or physician?"

"Both the one and the other," answered Morton, "the illustrious Noddy, whom mortals call Fuller, is, as we should say at Clifford's Inn, a '*qui tam*' doctor, administering quite as much to the spiritual as the bodily ailments of his patients — one, in short, who maketh a point of preparing his victims for heaven, as a compensation for abridging their allotted period upon earth."

"Would he might send them all, men, women, and children, every crop-eared prophecier of them all, even to Abraham's bosom," cried the knight savagely. "By heavens! I could hug the very pestilence, which has strode hither to fight so fiercely in my behalf! May they wither like frost-bitten weeds! may they perish like famished wolves, the prowling hypocrites!"

"A cordial anathema," replied Morton, in a cheerful tone, "but I hardly sympathize with your ferocity. I am not of an atrabilious temperament. Perhaps I should have been more useful if I had been less good-natured. What they intend against me, I know not. The Plymouth brethren would have had me

hung, but marriage and hanging go by destiny, and the hemp is not yet grown that is to serve me for a neck-cloth."

"I have already spoken to you concerning the necessity of caution upon these matters," answered Gardiner, "but one word more concerning this pestilence. You say that this Noddy or Fuller is the only quack whom they are provided with. Hath he skill in his craft?"

"Unquestionably," said Morton, "he cured the great Captain Littleworth, whom the settlers call John Endicott, of a desperate disease."

"I was not aware," said Gardiner, "that Endicott had been afflicted by any illness."

"He was troubled," said Morton, "with a chronic disease called a wife, and Doctor Fuller relieved him thereof handsomely."

"Aye, I heard," said Gardiner, "that Madam Endicott sank early under the climate. I did not know the part which Doctor Fuller played in the matter."

"T was his masterpiece," continued Morton. "But now, Mistress Gaunt, if it like Sir Christopher better, I will even give thee one trial in the air, before we look for any game."

They were standing at this moment upon that long, elevated knoll, to which the name of Merry-Mount peculiarly belonged, and upon which the hands of its sovereign had erected, and the hands of Endicott demolished, the first May-pole ever elevated in Massachusetts. The scene around was still unchanged. The barren cliff, destitute of trees, was covered with a scanty herbage, and adorned with a few stunted golden-rods, a goodly store of mullens, and a profusion of the aromatic weed called everlasting, which loves the most gravelly and barren soil. From this elevated summit the eye wandered with delight on that magnificent September morning, over the panorama of land and ocean, which glowed and sparkled in the bright sunshine and the invigorating breeze.

Morton, who had been caressing the beautiful falcon, which sat upon his fist, during his rambling conversation with Sir Christopher, now advanced a few yards into the wind. He then stopped, turned about, and suddenly unstriking her hood, tossed her into the air with an encouraging shout. The falcon expanded her strong wings with an impulse of delight, and rose directly over head, mounting in airy circles higher and still higher, till diminished to a hardly perceptible point, she hung stationary for a moment, in the blue depths above. Then, as if reconnoitering the world below, and searching for a quarry, she sailed slowly along with gently flapping wings, until, apparently disappointed in her observations, she commenced again her spiral ascent till she was lost to view. Morton now whistled. The piercing note seemed to penetrate the arch above. There was a moment of suspense, during which nothing was visible in the sky, and Sir Christopher, who had been watching the falcon's motions with eager interest, shook his head suspiciously at Morton, as if to intimate that the haggard had borne away her bells after all, and was not likely to obey her master's whistle. Morton answered the look with a confident smile, pointing upwards as he did so. At that moment the black point was again visible, at the next there was a rushing sound, and the hawk falling through the air with closed wings, and with the speed of lightning, suddenly settled, as if by enchantment, upon her master's fist.

"Bravely done, sweetheart!" said Morton, patting and fondling the obedient bird. "I'd trust thee with a thousand golden guineas, had I so much filthy lucre; and now to look for something to strike at. If a gaggle of geese would come by now, for it is time they should begin to congregate hither on their journey southwards —— but who comes here? the gentle Jaspar, as I live," continued Morton, who had been hooding his falcon again, and who now courteously saluted the new comer.

"I had almost grown weary of waiting," said the youth,

acknowledging the civility of Morton, "and had I not known that the long and unutterable ponderings between you and my cousin were something tedious, I should even have broken in upon your consultations. However, my patience hath been well rewarded. Of every thing which is delightful in the world, a falcon's flight is most delightful."

"Spoken like a young cavalier," said Morton gaily, "and now let us descend upon the marshes."

With this the sporting humorist led the way down the hill, and advanced along the creek, which meandered through the salt marsh, by which his domain was separated from the ocean. They now began to move very cautiously, because, as the season had already commenced, during which those meadows, and particularly the neighborhood of that creek, were the resort of innumerable water-fowl, including many of the varieties which yield the greatest amusement in falconry, Morton feared to flush the game before he desired it.

"Having no spaniel just at this moment at Merry-Mount," said he to Sir Christopher, "I have even brought the dignified Bootefish along with me to spring the fowl. Robin Bootefish, by the way, is destined for my chief falconer when I receive my earldom."

"Besides which," added Gardiner, "thou art thyself to be hereditary grand falconer of all the Massachusetts."

"I have no objection," answered Morton, "to any number of dignities, but a truce to trifling now, for this business must not be neglected."

Bootefish now advanced carefully, at a considerable distance in front of the others, holding a long pole in his hand. Gardiner held the goshawk's jesses loosely in his fingers, and held himself ready to unstrike her hood, as Morton designed that Ajax should fly at the game, which was first started, in order to afford a lesson to the haggard.

As had been rightly conjectured, Bootefish had not advanced very far, before he came suddenly upon a stray black duck, who happened to be feeding by himself in the plashy ground near the creek. The fowl rose screaming into the air, to the height of some dozen yards, and then flew in a straight line, and with great rapidity, almost directly over the heads of Morton and Gardiner. The knight, as quick as thought, jerked off the hood from the goshawk, and tossed her after her prey. The well-trained creature, her eyes flashing upon the quarry with unerring instinct, flew like lightning at her victim. Straight as an arrow flew the duck, with the velocity of the wind. With incredible swiftness the falcon pierced the air in his pursuit. Five minutes elapsed, and the pursuer and the pursued, flying in a perfectly straight line at the rate of a mile to the minute, had entirely disappeared from view. The sportsmen, using their long poles to assist them in leaping continually across the winding creek, in which exercise none was more adroit than Jaspar, followed as nearly as possible in the direction first taken by the duck, which was obliquely across the marshes, towards the sea. Morton paused at last, and shook his head. The duck had flown so low, so straight, and with such wonderful rapidity, that he deemed it almost impossible for the hawk to have overtaken him. As the party stood, however, breathless with their violent exercise, very near the margin of the sea, a black speck in the air became suddenly visible to the eagle eye of Gardiner, who pointed it out to his companions.

"You are right, by Jupiter, Sir Christo!" cried Morton, "the quarry has doubled upon her pursuer, and has lost the advantage of his straight flight. Ten thousand pounds to a guinea, he is a dead duck in five minutes."

As Morton spoke, the quarry flew again over their heads, at about double the height at which he had started upon his course, and with somewhat diminished rapidity. He had evi-

dently become disconcerted and confused by his fears, and now flew wildly and with frequent windings. The falcon, steady and unrelenting as destiny, followed close upon him, gaining at every turn. It was now that the chase became keenly interesting. The quarry, flying swiftly still, but in irregular circlings, and hotly pursued by her enemy, was easily kept in sight by the active sportsmen, who dashed hither and thither, running and leaping in every direction taken by the game. The airy chase rapidly approached its termination. The unfortunate victim, distracted and despairing, flew with diminished vigor. Already the wings of her enemy seemed to overshadow him, when suddenly the falcon rose high into the air above his head, mounting in short and rapid circles.

"Mark now, Sir Christopher," said Morton, looking with delight at the motions of his favorite, "mark now how beautifully she is going to stoop."

The words had scarcely left his lips, when the peculiar, hurtling noise was heard, and the goshawk, falling through the air like a meteor, struck the quarry with her pounces, and despite its struggles, flew upwards, holding it aloft in triumph.

"Beautifully trussed, by Jupiter!" cried Morton, whistling loudly as he spoke.

The obedient hawk descended to her master's call, and laid the palpitating body of her victim, whom she had beaten to death with her muscular pinions, directly at her master's feet. That done, she settled upon his fist again, shaking her silver bells, and turning her lustrous eye upon his, as if to read his approbation there.

"Prettily done, Mistress Ajax!" said Morton, who had in the mean time consigned the other falcon for an instant to Bootefish, that he might hold and caress the goshawk for an instant. He had hardly resumed possession of the haggard, who was intended by him to fly at the next game which was started, when

a hoarse cry of "whauk, whauk, whauk," sounded suddenly in the air, far above their heads. Quickly as lightning did Morton launch the falcon into the air.

"Now, my gentle peregrine, show the mettle you are made of," cried he, "for yonder comes the first gaggle of geese I have seen this season. Strike me now one of those screamers, goose or gander, I care not, and prove to me that the pains taken for your education have not been all in vain."

The falcon, who flew that day for the first time without a leash, rose like a rocket into the air. Singling, without hesitation, one from out the noisy flock of some twenty or thirty wild geese, who were swiftly winging their way from the north, not expecting such inhospitable treatment upon their arrival, he scattered confusion and dismay among them all. Uttering discordant screams, the flock flew hither and thither, seeking each to escape, by the best means it could, the fearful enemy.

"Looks yon falcon now," cried Morton, as all the sportsmen together dashed off in the direction taken by the hawk, "looks she not like a glorious old piratical Norman baron, pursuing a shrieking horde of base-born peasantry? Upon them, my jovial freebooter, down with the churls. Gloriously struck, by Jupiter!"

While he was speaking, the falcon, true to her breeding and her instinct, had selected and overtaken her quarry. Then suddenly stooping, she extended her enormous pounces, seized her victim with prodigious force, and broke its neck with one blow of her beak. Finding the dead body of her game too heavy to be raised aloft for an instant, and yet desirous of obeying her master's whistle, which sounded as soon as she struck the quarry, she was obliged to fly obliquely to the ground, bringing with her the dead fowl, which she obediently deposited at her master's feet.

"A hawk of a thousand," cried Sir Christopher, looking

with admiration at the gallant bird; "call her haggard no longer, for my life for it, there never flew a stauncher or more obedient falcon than she hath proved herself."

"Truly hath she done no discredit," answered Morton, "to her trainer, the future grand falconer of the Massachusetts."

So saying, he rewarded the hawk by tearing out the palpitating heart of the game, and presenting it to her. The hawk having devoured the morsel with relish, was now again hooded, and the party proceeded in search of more game.

There was no lack of it that day. Those wide marshes which skirted the sea abounded in water-fowl, and it was the commencement of the season when many varieties are just making their appearance on their way from the north. Ducks, brant-geese, curlews, were started from their feeding places in every direction. The hawks behaved well, the peregrine falcon established her reputation forever, and the party had as much sport as they desired.

They had been reposing for a little time, being somewhat tired themselves, and desirous of affording some respite to the indefatigable falcons. Indeed, both Gardiner and Jaspar had been quite satisfied with their morning's amusement, and were upon the point of abandoning the sport altogether. Morton, who was never weary of the chase, and was particularly devoted to falconry, reluctantly consented to accompany them.

A little sport was, however, in reserve for the party. As they were passing leisurely along the border of the creek, upon their way toward Merry-Mount, they suddenly surprised an enormous blue heron, who stood fishing in the stream. It was some unusual accident which had allowed them thus to surprise this melancholy, hermit bird, who is as keen-sighted as he is solitary. The lonely fisherman, vexed at being thus disturbed in his privacy, rose into the air, uttering a few morose and inharmonious screams, and with outstretched bill and neck, and long legs dangling behind him, sailed off before the wind.

The heron was of the largest size, standing nearly five feet in height, measuring more than six from wing to wing, and being at least double the weight of either of the hawks.

Quickly did Morton jerk the hood from off the haggard falcon's neck, and toss her down the wind, after the stately quarry.

"Bind me yon moody, long-legged misanthrope," cried he, as he whistled off his hawk, "kill me him handsomely, and like a gallant falcon as thou art, and thou shalt win a crown of glory both for thy master and thyself."

"'T is no child's play, either," cried Sir Christopher, as they all eagerly followed the heron's flight, "for the fellow will stand at bay if he is caught, and thrust with that long bill of his like a gladiator, so that the falcon will need all her mettle and the whole weight and strength of her pounces."

"Never fear the peregrine," cried Morton gaily, though somewhat out of breath; "my life on her courage and her success!"

The heron had risen high in the air, and then flown off before the wind, with a powerful and rather rapid stroke. The falcon gained upon him very fast, but seemed somewhat wary in approaching him. Although not courting a combat, but on the contrary evidently desirous of escaping his enemy by ignoble flight, yet there seemed something dangerous in the melancholy bird, which made the high mettled falcon cautious in her attack. As she neared the quarry, however, which she did within a very few minutes after she had been first launched in his pursuit, she seemed to be thrusting forth her mighty talons to grapple with her prey. Then, as if altering her intention, she suddenly rose spirally far above the heron, till she was almost entirely lost from view.

During all this time, Morton, who had advanced far beyond his companions, stood gazing eagerly and almost breathlessly upward.

In a moment, while the heron, somewhat perplexed, was steadily beating the air in the same direction which she had at first taken, the hawk suddenly appeared, falling as it were out of the heavens, from some invisible height, and swooping down upon her prey. When within a few yards of the quarry, however, she suddenly turned upon her wing, recovered herself, and slowly mounted again.

"How magnificently she cancelliers," cried Morton, still gazing intently upwards, and wholly rapt in the issue of the sport.

There was no answer, but Morton would have heard none, had it been made.

The heron meanwhile, somewhat puzzled by the manœuvres of his adversary, doubled upon his course, and now flew in rather a circling and hesitating manner.

Again the rushing sound struck the ear, and the falcon stooping again from a prodigious height, fell like a thunderbolt upon her prey. This time there was no cancelliering, but descending in a concentrated mass, she struck the quarry full in the back with her ferocious talons. The heron, desperately wounded, and struggling vainly to elude her clutches, at last flew slowly off, bearing his audacious enemy upon his shoulders. The falcon, meanwhile, strove to break the neck of her foe by repeated and powerful strokes of her beak, and made no effort to alter the direction of their flight. These ferocious blows were for a few seconds skilfully parried by the heron, who twisted hither and thither his long flexible neck, and dexterously foiled the murderous attack. Finding it difficult, however, to continue this game much longer, no longer hoping for safety in flight, and suddenly inflaming himself with the courage of despair, the heron, by an unexpected and dexterous movement, extricated himself for a moment from his enemy's pounces, threw himself backwards, and furiously attacked his enemy with his long,

sharp, powerful bill. Now had the falcon need of all her strength and spirit. The enemy, colossal in comparison with herself, was animated by fury and despair. Desperate and incessant were the lounges dealt her by the heron, who handled his long bill like a rapier. Gallantly did the falcon parry the furious thrusts, and return blow for blow. The champions were not unfairly matched, the falcon making up for her inferior length and weight by superior concentration of muscle and greater strength of wing..

Eagerly did Morton, totally lost to every thing in the world below, gaze upwards at the combatants, who now hung suspended in air a few hundred yards above his head. The aerial duel was desperate, but short. The falcon, full of wrath at being thus for the first time baffled, rose again for an instant into the air. She then descended with all the force and fury of her nature upon the quarry, recklessly received a desperate thrust, which pierced her through and through, and at the same instant smote her adversary to death with a furious blow which she was thus enabled to inflict upon his spine. At the next instant, both hawk and heron fell headlong to the ground, and lay locked in a deadly embrace at Morton's feet. Morton stooped eagerly down, extricated his favorite from the deadly weapon of her antagonist, which still transfixed her, tore her talons from his palpitating body, and placed her in his bosom. The fearless falcon turned her glazing eye upon her master, with an expression full of spirit and affection, shook her pinions gallantly for a moment, and then was still forever.

"Thy last flight is flown, my matchless haggard," said Morton, with a tear in his eye, gazing with unaffected sorrow upon the body of the falcon, and then laying her down side by side with her powerful enemy, who lay stone dead at his feet.

"Ye shall be buried together in one grave," said he at last, after contemplating the pair long and mournfully. "My poor

hawk, who came to my whistle day and night! Sawest thou ever a falcon in all the world, who stooped more gallantly, Master Jaspar?" concluded he, turning suddenly round.

"Shame upon thy lewd and cruel practices!" cried a voice at his side, which sounded very unlike that of Gardiner or of Jaspar. "How often, O, thou Master of Misrule, wilt thou provoke us in the wilderness, and grieve us in the desert?"

"And who the devil art thou," cried Morton in astonishment, "who art thus prophesying upon the salt marshes?"

Morton might well have been surprised, for as he looked about him, there was not a trace to be seen of Sir Christopher and the gentle Jaspar, and in their places he found himself surrounded by a party of grim-visaged Puritans, armed to the teeth, who evidently intended to devote themselves that morning exclusively to himself. So absorbed had he been in observing the struggle between his falcon and the heron, that the party had advanced upon him and made him their prisoner, before he was in the least aware of their approach.

Sir Christopher Gardiner, however, whose eagle eye, keener than that of hawk or heron, had observed the party at a long distance, as, after having apparently made an unsuccessful search at Merry-Mount, they descended upon the marshes, had eluded their observation, and, accompanied by his cousin, had glided unperceived away, at a time when Morton, in his eagerness, had advanced to so great a distance that it was wholly out of the knight's power to give him warning. As Sir Christopher had repeatedly, but fruitlessly, reminded his reckless companion of his danger, and as he had no desire unnecessarily to expose his character to suspicion, by allowing himself to be found in the company of one whom the Puritans considered so disreputable and odious, he had felt no hesitation in thus disappearing as rapidly as possible.

Morton, being used to such scenes, saw at once that all resistance would be useless. Moreover, after the first surprise was over, and he had found himself captured beyond all peradventure, his thoughts reverted to his dead falcon. That he was arrested did not surprise him, and he had long since exhausted his indignation at the tyrannical persecution which the Puritans seemed determined to inflict upon him. He should soon extricate himself, he thought, from this new dilemma, but who could restore to life his gallant hawk, whom he had been training so long, and who was as dear to him as the apple of his eye. Looking with profound contempt at the rigid countenances of his captors, he again raised the dead body of his favorite from the ground, and placed it in his bosom. Absorbed in his melancholy reflections, he stood there fondling the creature, whispering and whistling to her, as if his endearments could recall her to life, and hearing not a single word of the long exhortation with which the leader of the party was indulging him.

Finding his eloquence so utterly lost upon the hardened sinner, Captain Underwood broke off in his address, saying only in conclusion, —

"Thou wilt follow me now, and that obediently, O, thou Master of Misrule, else shall it go hard with thee!"

"And whither, most peremptory of Puritans?" said Morton carelessly, still caressing his hawk.

"Even to Charlestown, even unto the magistrates who have ordered thy instantaneous arrest, now effected by their unworthy servants."

"And what have I to do with the magistrates of Charlestown, or they with me?" replied Morton; "truly, I have as little relish for their company as they for mine."

"Verily," answered Captain Underwood, "Governor Winthrop, the deputy, and all the assistants, hold a solemn court to-morrow, to which thou art formally cited, then and there to

answer for thy various misdemeanors. Verily, the magistrates do intend to erect their authority throughout the land. They shall smite their enemies in the hinder part, and put them to perpetual reproach."

So saying, the captain of the party led the way, and his soldiers, taking Morton in their midst, started on their march to Charlestown.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUZERAIN OF MERRY-MOUNT DEPOSED.

Upon the day succeeding his capture upon the marsh, Thomas Morton, in custody of two or three tall fellows in buff jerkins and steel head-pieces, stood in the corner of the large room in the Great-house at Charlestown. This building, which had been constructed with especial care, by Mr. Graves, during the previous year, expressly to serve as a government house, was a timber-work mansion of very respectable dimensions, and stood upon the open plain below the Mishawum hills. In its neighborhood were huddled together a miscellaneous collection of booths, tents, and wigwams, in which the emigrants had established their temporary residence, and in which they were suffering dreadful ravages from the sickness which still prevailed with unabated fury. As nearly the whole population were upon the point of removing to the south side of the Charles River, where, at least, they could promise themselves a supply of wholesome water, which was denied to them at Mishawum, the infant village of Charlestown presented rather the appearance of a temporary encampment, than of an organized town. Still, however, the forms of government were rigidly observed, and the governor, with most of the magistrates, who resided in the Great-house, although active and benevolent in relieving the sufferings of the people, still maintained, throughout all the difficulties which beset them, an elevated and decorous deportment, which invested their responsible offices with a certain patriarchal air of authority, and which inspired the people with additional feelings of confidence and respect.

The potentate of Merry-Mount, with the good-humored expression which habitually characterized his face, was looking carelessly round him, whistling and talking to himself, besides making, occasionally, an unsuccessful attempt to draw some one of his attendants into conversation. The magistrates had not yet made their appearance in the apartment, although they were soon expected, as the third Court of Assistants, which had been held in Massachusetts since the arrival of Winthrop with the charter, was to be held that morning. Besides the armed attendants upon the magistrates, who answered Morton's flippant remarks with forbidding silence, there were clustered together, in the different corners of the room, a few stragglers, who appeared to be awaiting the arrival of the court, and who, in the mean time, were conversing in a low tone with one another. These persons all wore tall, steeple-crowned hats, and sad-colored garments.

"The seat of government is to be fixed at Trimountain, yonder," said a leathern-visaged, sinewy-looking individual, addressing a companion who stood near him; "at least, I understand that the governor, as well as the worshipful Master Johnson, have already decided upon removing thither immediately."

"Aye, Goodman Faunce," replied the individual addressed, "who rejoiced in the appellation of Jonathan Jellett, "and I have likewise decided to take my staff in hand and accompany their worships. The mortality which prevails upon this promontory is appalling. Verily it trieth the heart and the reins."

"Truly, the pestilence shooteth its arrows among us unsparingly," answered Faunce, "but it is in vain; the Lord is the rock of our refuge."

"'T is said," said a third person, who had not yet spoken, "that the company have determined to re-baptize yonder peninsula of Trimountain, which the heathens call Shawmut, seeing that it is likely to become a goodly town, and a large."

"And by what name do they propose to baptize the promontory, Goodman Pid?" asked Faunce.

"'T is to be baptized Boston," answered Pid.

"In honor and commemoration, doubtless," said Jellett, "of the Lincolnshire folk, and of the pious and learned John Cotton, who hath long time ministered in that ancient town, and who is shortly expected hither to prophesy unto us even at New Boston."

"Aye," continued Pid, "and doubtless New Boston will be the centre and the metropolis of the Massachusetts. The site is a goodly one, and the harbor commodious and safe."

"I am of your mind," said Jellett. It hath, moreover, become less necessary that one great fortified town should be built, according to the company's first intention. The discomfiture of the great Indian conspiracy, which hath so recently occurred, and the peaceable deportment of the heathen at present, renders an impregnable fort of less consequence."

"Aye, Goodman Jellett," answered Faunce, "the Sagamore John, who revealed that great conspiracy a few months since, hath merited richly of the Lord. But know ye, my brethren, who it is, who is said to have been the chief instigator of this foul conspiracy to cut off by savage hands the whole English population of New England?"

"Is it the Sachem Chickatabot?" demanded all the others, somewhat impressed by the speaker's air of mystery.

"Not at all," was the reply, "the heathen chieftain is well affected towards us. 'T is an Englishman, a vile and unworthy renegade, a papist, and a secret emissary of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the arch-enemy of our company. Such an one it is who hath fostered and guided the savage plot against us, thus revealed by the friendship of the gentle Sagamore."

"And who is this Englishman?" demanded all the speakers, with frowning faces and eager voices."

"I confess," answered Faunce, "that I do not know to absolute certainty his name nor whereabouts. Still I am informed that the company's officers have yesterday arrested for various mal-practices a certain rantipole disturber of our Canaan's peace. This man is called Thomas Morton, and I say unto you, that, beyond all peradventure, if any Englishman hath indeed thus foully conspired with the heathen against the lives and happiness of the Christian settlers, Thomas Morton is the man."

"And I say unto thee that thou liest!" cried the Lord of Merry-Mount, who had been intently listening to this conversation, "and were it not for these importunate friends who hold me so tightly, by Jupiter Tonans, I would make thee swallow the falsehood again, with a few inches of cold steel to digest it withal!"

The leathern visage of Goodman Faunce expanded like a pair of bellows, and he uttered an explosive ejaculation of amazement at this interruption. None of the party had observed the presence of Morton, so intent had they been upon their own conversation, nor was any one of them acquainted with his person. As his whole appearance, however, indicated a character of an entirely different stamp from their own, they now looked upon him with great curiosity, as he stood boiling over with indignation at the foul calumny which he had just heard concerning himself.

"I say thou liest!" roared Morton, continuing to vent his indignation in words of ludicrous vehemence, while his guards held him tightly in their arms, and vainly endeavored to stop his tongue — "I say thou art a slanderer! thou sour-faced, steeple-stoppered vinegar-cruet! What! is an Englishman's good name and fame thus lightly to be dealt with by such cold-blooded, canting ——"

"Silence, thou indecent and lewd babbler!" cried the men-

at-arms, holding him tightly, and at last succeeding in stopping his mouth, just as the door opened — "seest thou not that their worships are about to enter?"

As these words were spoken, the magistrates, preceded by two sergeants with halberts, entered the room, with grave visages and stately step, while all the company present pulled off their hats and made a respectful obeisance.

Governor Winthrop came first, a tall, erect figure in the prime of manhood, whose plaited vandyke ruff, dark-flowing robes, and magisterial chain, harmonized entirely with the simple and natural dignity which distinguished his presence. As he placed himself upon a slightly elevated seat, behind a large table at the upper end of the room, while Dudley and Johnson occupied the seats upon either side, and the rest of the assistants arranged themselves around the table, even Morton himself could not look upon him without respect. The governor's features were prominent but regular. The hair and beard were dark, the complexion olive, the hazel eye large and pensive, the forehead full of gravity and deliberation. The whole countenance expressed elevation of sentiment, earnestness and decision, tempered with great gentleness, and somewhat overshadowed with melancholy. All these characteristics dwelt particularly in the upper part of the face. The eyebrows, which were delicately pencilled and remarkably arched, imparted a singular character to the whole physiognomy; and, in fact, the whole expression of the brow and eye would have struck an imaginative person as that of a man, whose thoughts were habitually and steadfastly directed to things beyond this world.

Well contrasted with Winthrop was the erect, military figure, and stern, rugged features of the deputy Dudley. The low-country soldier, the bigoted and intolerant Calvinist, the iron-handed and close-fisted financier, the severe magistrate, but the unflinching and heroic champion of a holy cause, were all repre-

sented in that massive and grizzled head, that furrowed countenance, that attitude of stern command.

Was it grief for the wife of his bosom, whose grave was still green, the gentle Lady Arabella, who had left an earl's palace to lie, after a few short months, in the same wilderness grave with her husband; was it grief alone for that flower so early withered on this inhospitable shore, which darkened the melancholy countenance, and bent the slender form, of the youthful magistrate who sat at Winthrop's left hand? Or was a dim consciousness of his own impending fate mingled with his grief for the departed? Did Azrael's wing, hurtling so near him, already overshadow his soul? Gazing with an air of abstraction, Isaac Johnson sat at the board with his brother magistrates, but his thoughts seemed to be far away. His pale face and retiring figure mingled with the sterner and ruder heads of Sir Richard Saltonstall and the other assistants, and presented a pathetic contrast to them all.

After the teaching elder of the new church, which had so recently been gathered upon that spot, the Rev. John Wilson, had offered up a fervent exhortation, the record book of the company was opened, and the governor read a brief report of the proceedings of the court which had been held during the previous week.

"The next Court of Assistants will probably be holden, my brethren," said he, addressing his associates, "upon the same spot wherein we are now assembled. All subsequent ones will take place in the town hall, which is now well nigh completed, upon the opposite peninsula of Trimountain. It is desirable that, as soon as may be, a general court of all the freemen of the company should be holden, but I would suggest that it be deferred until the people have established themselves at Trimountain."

The suggestion was received with approbation.

"Touching the names which are to be respectively borne," continued the governor, "by the various plantations now, with the Lord's help, commenced, it was reserved to the present court to act thereupon. Mr. Deputy hath some proposition to make upon this head, as I have been given to understand."

Dudley arose, and read an order as follows: "Ordered, that the plantation at Mattapan be henceforth known by the name of Dorchester; that the town farthest up the Charles River, be called Waterton; and that the plantation at Trimountain, be called Boston."

The order was unanimously accepted by the court.

After a few other legislative matters had been disposed of, Deputy Dudley arose and proposed that the persons convicted at the last court, should be brought in to receive their sentence. No objection being made, the sergeant proceeded to call for David Phippen.

David Phippen, a lean-favored, unshaven, and marvellously unprepossessing individual, was then brought forward to their worships' table, and was thus addressed by the governor: —

"David Phippen, thou having been found guilty of gross and repeated drunkenness, art hereby sentenced, to the end that thou mayest soon amend thy life, and for the glory of the Lord, to receive forty lashes at the whipping-post, and to wear a red D around thy neck for the space of thirty days — the time and place of punishment to be appointed by the court. Take him away, sergeant."

"But your worships, ——" stammered the culprit, evidently desirous of making some observations upon the subject.

"Silence, drunkard!" thundered the grim deputy, looking at the trembling Phippen with an indignant countenance. "Take him away, sergeant, and obey the governor. Call Robert Dibble!"

Robert Dibble, a hirsute, somewhat uncleanly but good-humored and honest looking personage, being brought forward,

"Goodman Dibble," said the governor, thou having been convicted, upon thy own confession, of having killed a partridge upon the Sabbath, contrary to the express injunctions of Moses, art hereby sentenced by the court to receive forty stripes save one, at the whipping-post."

"But your worships," interposed the criminal, "my good woman was sore afflicted with the prevailing sickness, and I thought a bit of wild fowl ——"

"Take him away, sergeant!" said the deputy, who seemed to take a grim satisfaction in dispatching as much of this work as possible, while, on the contrary, the gentler governor read the sentences of the court, which he was obliged to deliver, with manifest repugnance; "call Master Zaccheus Smeedley."

"Master Zaccheus Smeedley," said the governor, as the next culprit was brought before the board, "thou having been convicted of the heinous sin of stealing from the Indians, and having confessed the same, art hereby sentenced by the court to forfeit thy title, and to be henceforth called plain Zaccheus Smeedley."

"Take him away," said the deputy, "and call Humphrey Rednape."

Morton, who had been listlessly observing the course of criminal jurisprudence adopted by the colony, and awaiting with some curiosity the decision of their worships upon his own case, now pricked up his ears, as he heard the name of the last culprit announced.

Humphrey Rednape, who had long ago left the domain of Merry-Mount, having deserted his sovereign soon after his first deposition by the military power of Standish, and having afterwards led a vagabond life in different parts of the country till his late arrest, now presented himself before the magistrates. The worthy unicorn retained a lingering relic of his swash

buckler air, but he was evidently in a state of decay, and presented a bedraggled and chopfallen appearance.

"*Quantum mutatus ab illo Hectore!*" muttered his former suzerain, as he looked attentively at the criminal.

"Humphrey Rednape," said the governor, in a solemn voice, "thou hast been accused of divers and sundry offences, whereof habitual drunkenness is among the least. Especially thou hast been convicted of the high and unpardonable crime of censuring and blaspheming our church, and of reviling the magistrates, for the which offence the court adjudges thee to be branded upon the forehead, to receive fifty lashes at the whipping-post, and after execution of said sentence, to depart without the limits of the patent, not to return again, upon pain of perpetual imprisonment."

"Numps, Numps, poor devil!" muttered Morton, compassionating the unlucky predicament of his former vassal; "could not thy lesson, learned at the Plymouth whipping-post, make thee wiser? '*Cynthius non aurem vellit et admonuit.*' Could not Apollo twitch thee by the ear? But I forgot, perhaps he pulled the wrong one, which hangs upon Plymouth pillory, and, ——"

"Silence!" roared Dudley, looking towards Morton, who was thus soliloquizing, in an almost audible tone; "silence! and hear the governor. Thy time will come soon enough, lewd babbler!"

A loud noise and scuffling, at the door-way, just at that moment, attracted the attention of the court, and a sergeant was ordered forth to inquire into the disturbance. Just at that moment, however, the door was flung violently open, and a man of gigantic dimensions, twirling a sledge-hammer in one hand, and holding the grinning head of a wolf, from which the blood was still dripping, in the other, strode into the apartment.

"Ye have fined me two pounds," cried the new comer, fling-

ing the ghastly trophy upon the council-table, "and ye may even take your payment out of yon brute's pretty face, or ye get nothing from Thomas Walford."

The magistrates looked with some surprise at this unceremonious proceeding upon the part of the reader's old acquaintance, the Mishawum blacksmith, while he in the mean while continued, with much ferocity, —

"Ye have placed a bounty upon the scalps of wolves, or else perhaps ye would have taken payment out of my hide, as I see ye do daily with the miserable creatures who submit to your saintly authority. Before long, perhaps, ye will set a bounty upon the scalps of Episcopalians, or of blacksmiths. Ye have hunted me like a wolf, and perhaps ye mean that I shall die like one. I have committed no sin, and yet ye deal with me as if I were a felon, because I am not of your communion, or your company."

"Peace, brawler!" roared Dudley, venting his indignation at last.

"Peace! peace! where shall I find peace?" cried the blacksmith, glaring at the deputy, with an evident inclination to demolish his skull with his sledge-hammer — while the granite-faced magistrate met his furious gaze with an expression as stern and unflinching as his own. "I was peaceful enough by my solitary forge, till ye intruded upon my settlement, and destroyed my peace. Of what crime am I accused?" continued he, suddenly turning to the court?

"Thou art accused and convicted," said Winthrop, gravely, "of confronting and maltreating the company's officers, thereby bringing the authority of the magistrates into contempt. The company regret to have brought matters to such a pass with thee, and would have been well pleased hadst thou been contented to abide peaceably and lovingly within their patent,

with acknowledgment of their jurisdiction. The company do not desire to deal harshly with thee, but thou claimest to hold thy land under an adverse title to our own. Furthermore, thou art the agent of John Oldham, a stubborn and litigious man, who hath not ceased to create trouble for the company. Still the magistrates are disposed to be gentle with thee, and for my own part I declare sincerely that I would willingly be thy friend, if thou couldest be disposed to dwell peaceably within the patent."

The governor's soft answer seemed to mitigate the blacksmith's wrath. At any rate, he did not seem disposed to argue the land title, at that moment, with their worships, and accordingly having made a respectful obeisance to Winthrop, and exchanged a ferocious look with the deputy, he turned towards the door, satisfied, for the moment, with the easy manner in which he had paid his fine.

As he was about departing, his eye fell upon Morton, who was standing near the door-way, and who was at that moment recognised by Humphrey Rednape, as the sergeant was leading him away.

"Beshrew my heart," said the blacksmith, good-naturedly, "how camest thou in this plight, my worthy gossip?"

"How indeed!" said Morton, "demand rather, how can a living man keep out of a scrape, now that the kingdom of the saints be fairly established. Here be three of us now, who are no better esteemed than the wicked, Numps Rednape, thou, my indomitable Vulcan, and myself, who, sooth to say,——"

"Silence!" roared the deputy, thoroughly enraged at the flippant conduct of Morton and the insolence of the blacksmith. "Remove the criminal, sergeant, and call Thomas Morton."

There was a considerable sensation among the spectators, as

the name of this last culprit was announced, for the fame of the uproarious monarch of Merry-Mount had spread far and wide throughout the bay. The magistrates looked with a severe expression upon him, as he advanced with his usual air of careless confidence, and the straggling groups, who were stationed in different parts of the chamber, clustered together to look with curiosity at the prisoner.

"Thomas Morton," said the governor, gravely, as the criminal stood unabashed before the magistrates, "thou hast been convicted of high and unpardonable crimes."

"Convicted, am I?" interrupted Morton, "convicted before trial. By Jupiter Tonans, that may be the law as laid down in Deuteronomy, but it would not sound so well at Clifford's Inn. Your charter, most worshipful governor, requires you to administer justice according to the laws of England."

"Peace, and listen to the governor!" cried Dudley, in a voice of thunder.

"So I intend to do, may it please the worshipful magistrates," continued the imperturbable Morton, "but the governor must even borrow the archangel's trumpet to outbray the voice of this respectable person, whom I take to be the crier of the court, and who, with submission, seems to me unnecessarily vociferous in proclaiming silence."

Thus coolly rebuking the grim deputy, Morton turned demurely to the governor, who said in reply to his first observation, —

"We do not intend to argue any legal points with you. Let it suffice, that we are aware of the responsibility of our position, but that we are determined that no man in the land shall treat our authority with contempt, or abide within our territory without acknowledging the lawful authority of this company. To our king and to our God we are responsible. To thee we intend but to announce our decision, regarding thee as one who

hath forfeited all right to a formal trial and conviction, by the manifest notoriety of his manifold offences."

"Would it be entirely superfluous," said Morton, "on the part of the Court, to give the criminal a trifling hint of some few of the high crimes and misdemeanors he is charged withal? Although convicted without trial, it would be a gratification to a pardonable curiosity, could I be instructed as to my offence, before receiving sentence."

"Thine own conscience must inform thee of all thy atrocious acts," interrupted Dudley, fiercely; "let it suffice that thou art thoroughly known to be a graceless reveller, a lewd mischief-maker, and a ravening wolf."

"Sayest thou so, my gentle lambkin," cried Morton, filled with indignation at the injustice with which he considered himself treated, and venting it as usual in the most rigmarole terms. "Callest thou me a wolf indeed? By Jupiter, then have I fallen among the most truculent and blood-thirsty lambs that ever nibbled in Old Canaan or New, — *Inter audaces lupus errat agnos*, — as Flaccus hath it."

"Peace, peace; listen to the governor," cried several of the magistrates in a breath, indignant at the prisoner's insolence, and determined once for all to put an end to the scene.

"Thomas Morton," resumed the governor, "in consideration of thy manifold crimes and misdemeanors, whereof the principal have consisted in distributing fire-arms and ammunition among the Indians, contrary to his late and to his present Majesty's proclamation; in lewd and riotous behavior, and in divers depredations and cruelties exercised towards the savages; for these and other offences, the court ordains, that thou be set in the bilboes at such time and place as they shall afterwards direct; that thou be afterwards imprisoned, until such time as the company shall find a vessel to convey thee back to England; that thy house at Mount Wollaston be burned to the ground, in

order that the habitation of the wicked be no more seen in Israel; and all thy worldly goods be confiscated, as a compensation to the Indians, for the injuries which they have suffered at thy hands."

"*Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?*" cried the culprit, astonished and indignant at the severe sentence thus communicated to him — "To be set in the stocks, I, Thomas Morton of Clifford's Inn, Gentleman, Lord of Merry-Mount, and Sachem of Passanogessit, my worldly goods to be confiscated, my house to be burned? Wherein, I pray thee, right worshipful governor, consist these mighty offences by me committed against the peace and comfort of the savages?"

"Thou hast unjustly taken a canoe from one of them," said Winthrop, "and complaint to that effect hath been entered against thee. Furthermore, it hath been proved that thou hast discharged fire-arms against them and wounded several, for refusing at once to furnish thee with the said canoe, and to row thee therein across the river of Wessaguscus."

"O Jephthah! Judge of Israel! O Minos! Radamanthus! and all the puisnè justices of Pluto's grim dominion," cried Morton in a whirlwind of eccentric indignation, "is this the jurisprudence practised in the kingdom of the saints? Then may the Lord deliver me into the hands of sinners from this time forth and forever! Now could I find it in my ———"

"Silence, silence, thou lewd, impious, blasphemous babbler!" cried Dudley, indignant at the prisoner's boldness.

"I will not be silent," cried Morton, with rising rage, "by heavens! I will tell thee the truth to your grisly beards; my tongue shall wag for once, even if ye bore it with red-hot irons afterwards."

"Have a care," cried Dudley, "lest thou be taken at thy word."

"I tell ye," continued Morton, "that it is all one long, ludicrous patchwork, this your list of charges against me. I know your hatred of me; I know ye suspect me; I know ye fear me. Even in the babble of your chamber here have I learned the foul imputations against my fame. Ye suspect me of fostering and encouraging the late Indian conspiracy against the Christians. If I were guilty of such a crime, hanging and quartering were too good for me, but ——"

"Thomas Morton," interposed the Governor, "no such charges against thee have been preferred to this court; neither do I, speaking in my individual capacity, entertain any such suspicions concerning thee."

"And so then," resumed the prisoner, "I am really to be punished for cruelty to the salvages, I their sagamore, suzerain, shepherd, pow-wow! Why, the creatures love, reverence, and obey me. They frisk round me like lambs; they will bleat their hearts out with grief when they see my palace in flames, and ——"

"Enough of this," interrupted Winthrop; "the court hath declared its sentence. Nothing can alter its resolution. Its decrees are binding, and they who are aggrieved by its acts have their remedy at home, but not here within our patent. All present complaint therefore is idle, and I counsel thee in the most friendly manner not to aggravate thy offence by unnecessary recalcitration and recrimination."

"Aye, I suppose I should go down upon my marrow bones," persisted Morton, "and offer humble and hearty thanks that ye have left my head upon my shoulders, or at least my ears upon my head, after the atrocious crimes of which I have been convicted and condemned without a trial. But I promise ye that the bowels of the land shall be stirred for this; the king and council shall hear of it, and may my soul perish in everlasting ——"

"Take him away, take him away, he blaspheneth," roared the deputy.

"Remove the criminal at once," added Winthrop, gently but decidedly.

And with this the men-at-arms led the Lord of Merry-Mount into confinement.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GENERAL COURT.

It was the middle of October. An autumnal day, such as exists only in the western hemisphere, was shining upon Shawmut, or, as it must now be designated, Boston.

The stately groves, which adorned without encumbering the picturesque peninsula, the scattered trees of colossal size which decorated its triple hills, wore the gorgeous drapery of an American fall. Unlike the forests of the older world, which, thinly clad in their beggar-weeds of brown and russet, stand shivering and sighing in the dark and misty atmosphere, the monarchs of the western soil had arrayed themselves in robes of Tyrian purple and crimson, scarlet and gold, and like reckless revellers in some plague-struck city, attired in all their carnival bravery, and beneath a vault of crystal radiance, were awaiting the destroyer's stroke. The recent pilgrims from the older world, wandered through these glowing and glittering woods with admiring eyes. The forests seemed like the subterranean groves with which the African enchanter charmed Aladdin, where rods of blossoming rubies, and boughs overladen with topaz, emerald, sapphire, and diamonds, dazzled the eye with their luxuriant and intertangled magnificence, and where every footstep fell upon countless heaps of crushed but sparkling jewelry. Or, as the eye rested upon some hill, covered from base to summit with its radiant foliage, where every prismatic color seemed flung at random in one confused and gaudy mass, a vagrant fancy might have deemed it nature's mighty palette, with all the blent and glaring colors wherewith she paints the rainbows, myriads of which seemed

struggling and wreathing themselves through the forest branches to float into the cloudless heavens.

There is no power in language to represent, certainly not to exaggerate, the brilliancy of an American forest in autumn. The precise reason for the peculiarity which the foliage exhibits, has never been satisfactorily ascertained, but every species of tree and shrub seems to have a tint peculiar to itself. Upon that memorable morning, which may be called the birth-day of the Massachusetts metropolis, the woods which decorated the promontory, or covered the chain of hills which encircled it, were still virgin from the axe, and were robed in all their natural glory. The oak still retained his foliage undiminished, but every leaf, though green in the centre, was edged with scarlet, and spotted with purple; the sumac, bare and leafless, lifted its crimson crest; the grape vines hung around every cliff festoons of clustering coral; the red maple, first to be transfixed with the frost-arrow, stood with every leaf crimsoned in its blood; the hickory looked like a golden tree transplanted from some vegetable mine, as it displayed its long leaves of pale metallic yellow; the birch looked like a flaming torch, fit for the hand of autumn's goddess, when seeking through the world her ravished Proserpine; while mingled with and contrasting solemnly with all, the dark pines held on high their plumes of fadeless green.

Such was the scenery which surrounded the infant village of Boston. Since the date of the last chapter, nearly all the inhabitants, accompanying the governor, most of the magistrates, and the minister, Mr. Wilson, had removed to the triple-headed peninsula, leaving only seventeen male inhabitants at the opposite promontory of Charleston.

Blaxton, who claimed the whole of Shawmut, both by grant and by occupation, had however himself invited the settlers thither, having been touched by their sufferings, and, as it then seemed, the inadequacy of their first location to supply their

wants. He still dwelt at his hermitage, separated by the whole breadth of the peninsula from his new neighbors. His cottage, as we have already described, was placed upon the edge of the western cove, while the lowly church, the rude town-house, the market-place, and the thatched cabins which constituted the little village, were placed upon the eastern or seaward verge of the promontory, nestled beneath the commanding summit which was soon afterwards fortified upon one side, and protected from the northern gales by the tall cliff which rose upon the other, and which still holds the ancient tombs of the Pilgrims.

Walter Ludlow and his sister had some time before removed to the new settlement, which was evidently destined to become the principal position in the new colony.

Henry Maudsley was still absent, but a change had come over the relative position of the lovers during the weary months of their separation. Communication by letter, which it had been absolutely necessary for Maudsley to make to Walter Ludlow, had led to some mutual explanations. Maudsley discovered the extent and the wilfulness of his errors at a moment when it seemed too late. Still, if he had remained in New England, it might have been even longer before the perverse fate which seems to delight in perplexing lovers, would have allowed them fully to understand each other. Moreover, as has been already hinted, a total revolution in his feelings upon the subject concerning which they had been so disunited, had taken place Circumstances, which were in the very process of development, had contributed much to this change, which the love of Esther had commenced. The example of Winthrop, Johnson, and others, had made a deep impression upon his excitable imagination. Moreover, he had been recently brought into intimate connection with many of the leaders and eminent persons concerned in the Massachusetts emigration, who remained in England. Had not an imperious necessity forbidden, he

would, upon first receiving the letter which so suddenly and yet so simply unsealed his eyes, have abandoned a country which now had assumed an entirely different aspect in his sight, have hastened across the ocean, never to return, and have united his destiny forever with that of Esther.

Alas! at the very moment when this revulsion first commenced in his feelings, he had found it impossible to indulge and to foster it; and, now that a total change had indeed come over him, now that the groundlessness of his fears and suspicions had been explained; now that none of the obstacles which had formerly impeded the current of their loves, existed, a new and almost an insurmountable one seemed to have interposed itself, which time only could remove.

It was, however, a source of happiness to Esther, even in this the period of their separation, that now at least, and for the first time, her lover and herself understood and confided in each other. She felt a firm and unwavering hope, now that their hearts and souls were indeed united, that their destinies ere long would mingle with each other, and flow on together to the end.

At this moment, however, she had cause for real anxiety, for a long and an inexplicable silence upon the part of Maudsley, had given rise to doubts of every thing but of his truth.

Other exiles of note, besides Walter Ludlow, had recently taken up their residence at Shawmut. Among others, the eccentric Maverick, the first slaveholder of Massachusetts, had established himself and his negroes upon Noddle's Island, where he had built himself a fort, defended by four pieces of artillery, and where he treated all comers with a generous and noted hospitality. Among others, he had entertained Governor Winthrop and his friends, upon their first arrival in the bay, although his politics and religion were opposed to those of the company, and although, in the course of time, but little cordiality existed between the new comers and himself.

The first general court had been that day held at the new metropolis. It was an assembly of all the freemen of the corporation in person. The rude town-hall, where they had been gathered, stood where now stands that respectable edifice, which having been successively state-house, city hall, and post-office, has at last retired in its old age from public employments, and devoted itself to private affairs. The thatched and humble church where Wilson ministered, stood nearly opposite; while, around the open field between, which served as a market-place for the little village, and which accommodated their pillory, stocks and whipping-post, were clustered the mud-walled cabins where the settlers had established themselves, in anticipation of the coming winter.

A stream of solemn visaged personages had poured out at last from the rude capitol. The court was over, but many stragglers, in their steeple-crowned hats and sad-colored garments, loitered about the agora, or, accompanied by their demure wives, were wandering among the primitive groves which covered the greater portion of the peninsula.

A good deal of earnest conversation was going on among the loiterers in the public square. Besides many very important matters of a purely political nature which had been discussed, several topics had been broached at the general court, which threatened to sow the seeds of future dissension among the colonists. The great points of the compatibility of offices, whether ruling elders should be magistrates, and the reverse, whether the political influence of the ministers required enlargement or contraction, whether the civil power was justified in punishing breaches of the first table, and many other kindred topics had been touched upon in the town-hall, and were discussed with great fervor by the straggling parties who were still sauntering in the October sunshine.

Several respectable individuals, among whom might have been

observed Goodman Faunce, with his friends Jonathan Jellett and Peter Pid, stood under a mighty oak which spread its rainbow foliage over half the square.

Being all freemen, they had of course been present at the general court, the regular organization of the assembly requiring the personal attendance of all those who were free of the corporation, until the increasing numbers, a few years later, required the introduction of the representative system.

The General Court was in reality the only legislative body under the charter, although the Court of Assistants, which had been designed by that instrument to wield only executive and judicial functions, had already begun, by a patriarchal assumption of authority, to exercise the law-making power of its own will. So little of the democratic element, however, seems to have existed at that early day in Massachusetts, that this usurpation on the part of the magistrates, unconscious as it almost seems to have been, excited no jealousy upon the part of the freemen, to whom the legislative power exclusively belonged, and at this very first general court, holden at Boston, it had been unanimously voted, by simple erection of hands, "that in future the freemen should choose the assistants, by whom the governor and deputy should be chosen from among themselves, and that, furthermore, the said governor, deputy, and assistants, should have full power to make the laws, and to choose officers to execute the same." Such a quiet and voluntary abdication of political power on the part of the popular body in favor of their rulers, is unexampled, and speaks volumes in favor of the patriarchal, pure, and unambitious characters of those early rulers. How often in the world's history has such unlimited power been placed in a few hands, and been restored without a struggle, and without the faintest attempt to establish a regular and unlimited oligarchy!

The respectable Faunce, however, seemed to have a glimmer-

ing notion of the tendency of the measure which had so recently passed by acclamation, and was taking some pains, now that the vote was taken, to point out its consequences to his companions.

"The worshipful governor," said he, "is free from self-seeking, and desires nothing but the temporal and eternal advantages of the colony. But look ye, my friends, the government may come in time to be administered by hands which are not so clean, and I, for one, should be well pleased to have a voice in the making the laws which are to govern me, the more so as his majesty's charter hath given me the right to do so."

"Thou wert even a caviller in politics, Goodman Faunce," answered Jellett; "now I confess for my part that I feel but little calling for such knotty subjects. If the worthy and worshipful magistrates are willing to take this troublesome burthen off our backs, why I must even feel beholden to them for their kindness. They know more of law-making than we do. To make laws, brother Faunce, is a trade, I take it, like any other. Now if it comes to mending a kettle or a stew-pan, I, being by temporal calling, a tinker, may very ——"

"Nonsense, nonsense," exclaimed Faunce, with some excitement, "although I have the deepest veneration for the character of our worthy magistrates, or rather for our chief magistrate, for truly there are times when the deputy is little more than a vessel of wrath, and is a hard-handed man at a bargain, moreover, while the governor is as generous as sunshine, still I say do I mislike this laying the reins on the back of a horse, however good-tempered he may be. The best of us are but sinful, and the bit will get between the teeth."

"It is highly generous upon the part of their worships," modestly suggested Peter Pid, "to take this troublesome office of making laws, as well as of seeing to their execution. Few would be willing or able to do this double work in a holy cause. But they are competent. Issachar is a strong ass, though he

coucheth between two burdens," concluded Master Pid, intending to be complimentary to the magistrates.

Dismissing the discussion of the recent vote of the assembly as a topic, upon which, perhaps, too many words had been wasted, although without their consciousness, it had effected a political revolution in an instant, the three worthies passed to a warm, although somewhat unprofitable discussion of some knotty points in divinity, which had already begun to distract the metaphysics, and consequently the politics of the colony. Goodman Faunce, much to the horror of his associates, broached the doctrine of justification by sanctification, which he doughtily defended, while Pid treated the doctrine of good works with indignation, and stood manfully out for a covenant of grace. Several persons, both male and female, joined the party in the discussion, and the sun was high in the heavens before it had terminated. In the meantime, however, as the usual hour for such ceremonies approached, the centre of the market-place was cleared, in order that punishment might be inflicted upon several persons who had incurred it during the past few weeks. All the whipping and branding, however, which had been ordained by the last Court of Assistants, had been dispatched upon the preceding day, so that the whipping-post was idle. Culprits, however, who had committed offences of a lighter nature, were now led forward.

First of all came a beadle, leading along two women, with their hands tied together, and with their heads and faces covered with an iron framework, one bar of which was ingeniously fitted across their tongues, compelling them to keep their mouths open, and the unruly member quiet. These were notorious scolds, a kind of culprits which the wisdom of those patriarchal days punished in common with drunkards, vagrants, Quakers, Antinomians, and other disturbers of the public peace. After being solemnly paraded up and down the market-place for half

a dozen times, each was tied in a chair, and seated before the door of her own house, where she was to be left till evening.

Next came a quizzical figure, led along by a sergeant armed with a halberd. It was a famous toper, undergoing punishment for his manifold deviations from the path of total abstinence. He was attired in what was called the drunkard's cloak, and which was nothing more nor less than a beer-cask, with the lower end knocked out, so as to allow him to use his legs, with a hole through the other, through which appeared his head, and two apertures in the sides through which his hands were thrust. Thus coopered up in the emblem of his sins, the culprit was several times solemnly paraded up and down the square, and then tied to the whipping-post, which stood very near the stocks. As the culprit had, however, upon this occasion, been only sentenced to public exposure till nightfall, and not to personal castigation, he was left standing in his cloak at the post, to endure the jibes, the rebukes, or the silent pity of all the inhabitants.

In the mean time, this being the day appointed for Morton's penance, and the hour of noon having arrived, a sergeant, with four men-at-arms appeared, bringing with them in durance vile, the luckless Lord of Merry-Mount. He apppeared to have used all his philosophy to show himself superior to his fate. He walked along between two severe looking Puritans, with a firm and dignified step. His countenance wore its usual frank and bold expression, although an occasional nervous twitch at the corners of his mouth, showed that a sense of humiliation was working within him. He allowed himself, however, to be seated upon the rough log, lifted one leg after another to be inclosed in the appropriate apertures, and saw the plank duly let down and fastened without a struggle.

When he was thus properly ensconced in his ignominious position, the soldiers left him to his fate, to be a mark for the

curiosity or malevolence of all who passed across the market-place until evening.

The knowledge that the celebrated Master of Misrule at Merry-Mount was that day to be set in the stocks, was, of course, very general among the settlers, so that he had sat there but a very few minutes, before half the inhabitants of Boston, besides many from the neighboring plantations, thronged to that wilderness-square to look at him.

He preserved his equanimity, however, as if determined not to let the Puritans observe how deeply he felt his degradation.

"*Quid omnium vultus in unum me truces?*" muttered he, quoting his favorite Horace to the last. "Why the devil are ye all gaping at me? Saw ye never a gentleman and a cavalier in unfortunate circumstances before? Look your fill, I beg ye; ye have won the day, ye rascally croppies, so even enjoy your triumph."

With these and other similar ejaculations, uttered, however, in an inaudible tone, did the deposed potentate vent his spleen and console himself in his downfall.

He had not sat there long, before he had been examined and commented upon by nearly all the inhabitants, after which, the first curiosity having been appeased, he was left at times in total solitude, interrupted at intervals by the visit of some straggling wayfarer.

As the square was for a moment empty, the Lord of Merry-Mount cast his eyes upon the rueful individual in the wooden cloak, who stood upon the other side of the field.

The careless look, however, which he threw upon his brother in affliction, became a fixed and concentrated stare, as he suddenly recognised the familiar features of the individual who stood there in such fantastic plight.

"Hey-day," he cried, and would have rubbed his eyes for greater certainty, had his hands not been tied behind him; "hey-

day, is it thou, indeed, most cherished of my vassals. Is it thou, indeed, my butler, my Bootefish? *Proh pudor!*"

"This be that individual, your worship," answered Bootefish, for it was no other than that worthy person, who was terminating thus ignobly a vagrant career in different parts of New England, which he had begun upon Morton's first capture by Miles Standish; "this be the individual, if a man in a wooden jerkin like this can be called by that honored name. This be the way the bloody psalm-singers have coopered up your faithful Bootefish. Truly they hate us of the true church, your worship."

"Ah, they have got the upper hand of us," said Morton, "and they show no generosity in their victory. And yet, by Jove! I could laugh at the figure we cut here. Here sits the potentate upon his throne, and there stands the prelate in his robe. What a termination to our golden visions!"

"Truly, your worship, I have had no visions of late," answered Bootefish, "but of the whipping-post. And yet, may I be damned! if I would not take that as soon as this. To wear a hogshead under my jerkin is what I have ever done, thus carrying out, as best I might, the merciful intentions of nature. But a hogshead outside is a disgrace which I cannot brook. A pretty figure do I cut, forsooth, in this ridiculous cask."

"Not a whit, not a whit," said the indomitable Morton, gaily. "It becomes thee like a robe of honor. Was not Cœur de Lion kept in a cage? Did not Diogenes live in his tub? Nay, thou lookest like the ancient philosopher, seeking among these sour-faced Puritans for a man; and for a lantern, hast thou not that radiant nose of thine?"

As Morton spoke, several persons crossed the square, looking sadly and earnestly, first at one of the culprits, and then at the other. Last of all came Walter Ludlow and his sister, accompanied by an individual with the most peaked and pointed hat, the most staid and starched collar, and the most dismal cloak that could be found in the whole patent.

The step of Esther was less elastic, and her countenance more dejected than it had ever been. A shadow was upon that beautiful face, as if projected from afar by coming evil. She threw a hurried glance of sincere compassion at the criminals, and past hastily onward with her brother towards their new domicile, which, much superior in character to the rude hovels around, had been constructed in part of the materials brought from their old residence at Naumkeak, and stood more than half a mile south from the church, and not far from the "governor's green," where Winthrop's mansion was soon afterwards erected.

The individual, however, who accompanied the Ludlows was observed to lift his hands, and to roll his eyes upward with a kind of holy horror, as the prisoners met his view. The Ludlows passed on, but this person still lingered in the square, influenced, apparently, by curiosity, or by a desire of administering a rebuke to the two unhappy culprits. He stood for a moment in the centre of the square, looking alternately at Morton and at Bootefish; heaved a deep sigh, and then seemed almost to prostrate himself upon the ground. Whether, contrary to Puritanic custom, he intended kneeling down in prayer in behalf of the prisoners, did not for a moment distinctly appear. He said not a word, however, but rising up, a moment afterwards, he suddenly flung a cabbage-stalk at Bootefish with such unerring precision, that it hit him full upon the nose; and then turning round, he bestowed the same favor, although with less success, upon the unfortunate Lord of Merry-Mount. Then lifting the steeple-crowned hat from his head for an instant, he disclosed the grinning, malicious face of Peter Cakebread; uttered a shrill laugh, and, gathering up his long black cloak about his waist, he threw a somerset, such as was never executed before or since in Puritanic garments, and then left the square.

"Alas!" muttered Morton, whom this last indignity, inflicted

by the meanest of his former vassals, wounded deeply — "alas! is this the end of all my splendid visions? Was it for this that I have abandoned my country and my profession? Was it for this that I gave up the lord keeper's wig? To sit in the stocks and be pelted by Peter Cakebread? My race is run; my sun is set. Still, although the saints have conquered the sinner, shall they not crush his spirit? Do your worst, ye chosen of the Lord! degrade his person, confiscate his worldly goods, ye terrify him not, —

'Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KNIGHT'S LAST SCHEME.

Several weeks after the occurrence of the last scenes which have been depicted, Esther Ludlow was walking in the neighborhood of her new home. Her destiny seemed still perverse. Now that the great cause, to which her soul had been devoted, had triumphed over every obstacle, and had already established itself upon foundations never to be shaken; now that she could have gone exultingly forth, like Miriam, with timbrel and song of triumph, was she yet oppressed with a deep sense of her own personal disappointment? A change had come over her destiny during the interval which had elapsed. Maudsley was still away, and nothing concerning his fate had reached her for a long time. But although an ocean rolled between them, their hearts were no longer separated by an unfathomable gulf of suspicion and mutual distrust.

Maudsley had left New England, believing that Esther's affections had been alienated from him, doubting, indeed, whether there had ever been the faintest response upon her part to his deep and absorbing passion. He had, however, previously to his departure, allowed himself, as we have seen, to send a solemn warning to her, touching the character of the man who appeared to have exercised over her some mysterious and unnatural fascination. He would have been incapable, moved by jealousy alone, to have traduced the character of one, concerning whom he knew little, while he suspected much; but even had Esther been nothing to him, he would still have felt it his imperious duty to warn her of her danger, such reliance did he place

upon his presentiments, his dim reminiscences, and the fragmentary knowledge which he had acquired through Cakebread's treachery. Neither did he hesitate, although a delicate sense of honor would at first seem to have forbidden it, to make full use of all the information conveyed to him by that crafty knave. The reader will judge in the sequel, whether the nature of the circumstances did not more than justify him in such a course.

The very first letter received by him after his departure from New England was from Walter Ludlow. His own answer paved the way in the most natural manner possible, for a full and free explanation on the part both of the brother and sister. The clear sunlight of truth dissolved all the misty phantoms which had disturbed his reason, and he bitterly acknowledged and deplored the wilful and blind impetuosity by which he had both suffered and inflicted so much distress.

But Esther was happy, when she reflected that her lover now sympathized fully, deeply with her own feelings; and his letters, which reached her at long intervals, breathed at once the most passionate devotion to herself, and the most ardent affection for the great cause which, in accordance with the enthusiastic temperament of that age of religion, his impressionable spirit had felt itself suddenly called upon, as was St. Paul's, by a supernatural voice, to reverence, and with all his heart to serve. Still his absence was protracted, and although Esther was aware that matters of deep import had occupied him, and required his presence in different parts of Europe, yet she felt sick at heart, when she reflected upon the many dangers that might still lie in his pathway.

Reflecting intensely and sadly upon these matters, Esther lingered that morning in the leafless grove which extended westerly from her new abode. A presentiment of coming evil, for which she could not account, and which she could not shake

off, weighed upon her spirit, as the coming thunder-storm oppresses and surcharges the yet cloudless atmosphere.

The radiant autumn was no more. Bleak December, with its long nights of stormy darkness, and its short hours of pale and broken sunshine, sat upon its gloomy throne. The day was chill, the landscape brown and dreary. Suddenly Esther heard a step in the forest; she looked up, and for the first time in many months saw the form of Sir Christopher Gardiner. The warning images which had thronged her brain for the past hours, now seemed to have had their meaning. They seemed suddenly to have been compressed and concentrated into one threatening phantom, and that phantom wore the form of the hated and mysterious knight. She had thought him absent, never to return; she had almost deemed him dead, at least she had schooled herself into the conviction that his dark countenance was never again to be bent upon her own, that his stealthy step was never again to cross her path; when lo! at the very instant when her soul was most gloomy, when her heart hung like lead in her bosom, at that very instant Sir Christopher Gardiner stood before her. 'T was strange, she had certainly seen him, gliding beneath the leafless branches of an oak. That spare, Arab-like figure, those dark and frowning features, could not be mistaken; and yet, as she looked again, he was not there. Could he have passed her by without observing or without recognising her? Had he gone forward to the house which stood at no great distance from the spot? Was the apparition but a creation of her boding and disordered fancy? Had the earth suddenly gaped and swallowed him? It was a mystery, but every thing connected with the knight was a mystery. All that she knew was, that she had seen him within ten yards of the spot where she stood, and that now he had disappeared.

While she was thus ruminating upon the strangeness of the circumstance, she felt herself suddenly seized from behind,

with determined although gentle force. She would have cried aloud, but even as in the motionless tortures of a night-mare, her tongue clove to the roof her mouth. She would have struggled, but her limbs refused to obey her will. A sensation as if, after all, she was but suffering the short-lived agony of a waking dream, overpowered her. In an instant afterwards her face was muffled in a cloak, her arms were bound, and thus pinioned, blinded, and deprived of all power of motion or utterance, she found herself rapidly borne away she knew not whither. Within five minutes afterwards, she felt herself gently deposited upon a seat, and after a brief delay, she learned by the rocking motion and the noise of dashing waves, that she had been placed in a boat, and was now upon the water. Whither, wherefore, or in whose company, she knew not. Not a whisper reached her ear, not a ray of light pierced the thick veil by which her vision was carefully shrouded. Gardiner's dark image rose again to affright her soul, and she entertained not a doubt that he was the author of this fearful misfortune, which had now befallen her, and seemed to threaten her destruction. Whether the knight, still brooding angrily over her absolute and peremptory rejection of his addresses, had returned after so long an absence to wreak that vengeance upon her which he had so darkly and obscurely threatened at their last and decisive interview; whether she had fallen suddenly into the hands of some prowling party of savages; whether she was now floating in a canoe, to be borne away into fearful captivity in the remote wilderness; whether she was to be placed on board some outward bound vessel, of which she knew there were one or two to set sail immediately from the colony, to be borne beyond the ocean, she knew not; and she lay shuddering, praying and anxiously expecting her doom with horror as intense as could pervade, without absolutely overmastering and destroying, a solitary woman's reason.

An eternity of anguish seemed to have passed over her, al-

though she could not form with the slightest accuracy an opinion as to the actual length of time which had elapsed since her first capture, when the sails of the boat seemed to be flapping heavily, and then to be furled around the masts. Directly afterwards the light keel seemed to touch a pebbly shore, and she was then again lifted from her position, and borne rapidly away.

After a few moments, a door seemed to open, and she was carried within a building. She was then placed with great gentleness upon a cushioned seat, and directly afterwards, the cords which bound her were loosened, and the cloak by which she was muffled was removed. For a moment she dared not to open her eyes, and she sat collecting all the energy which was left her, before she should venture upon the new scene of horror which doubtless was impending. At last she looked wildly and fearfully round. She found herself in a strange apartment, specious but uncouth in its appearance, evidently the abode of civilized men rather than of savages, but resembling in its equipments nothing which she had ever before seen. She deemed herself alone, and was uttering a devout thanksgiving for even this momentary respite, when a stealthy step struck her ear, and then she found herself in the company of Sir Christopher Gardiner.

"We meet again, Esther Ludlow," said he, in a gentle and melancholy tone, "we meet again, never to separate."

Esther, as pale as ashes, looked in his face without power of reply.

"Since we were last together," resumed the knight, "I have dwelt amid savage scenes, and with men more savage than the deserts where they dwell. I intended to beat down, to annihilate the passion which had taken possession of my soul. The idleness to which the wilderness has doomed me has, I suppose, rendered the feeling uncontrollable."

"Spare me a repetition of these odious professions," said

Esther, looking at the knight with a pale and impassible visage.

"I have but very few words to speak, Esther," he continued, "and those will soon be spoken. I intended, both for your sake and my own, to conquer a fatal passion. I have not been used to hear words of contempt and repugnance from woman's lips, and yet I endured your disdain without resentment."

"Till this moment," interrupted Esther, her blood mounting with indignation at the calm and measured language of her persecutor, "till this moment I hardly knew what disdain and hatred were. Heaven forgive me that I want words to express my loathing for you now!"

"I have already told you," he continued, "that such language from your gentle sex is new to my ear. I never knelt so long in abject adoration to living creature as I have done at your feet, and I have received nothing but reproaches. I resign all hope of your love ——"

"Then release me, restore me, if you are not in truth a very demon," said Esther.

"Pardon me," continued the knight, "I fear that my habits of life, and the philosophy in which I have been schooled, have rendered my character incomprehensible to a person as single-hearted and pure-minded as yourself. You are now within my power."

"If you are a man," exclaimed Esther, "you are incapable of abusing that power."

"If I were not a man," coolly resumed the knight, "perhaps I should be. You are, I repeat it, absolutely in my power. I am a man bound by no ties, recognising no laws, obeying the will of no living creature but my own, respecting nothing, fearing nothing, loving nothing, but yourself."

"May God in his wrath blast such blasphemous love!" said Esther, with ungovernable scorn.

"Your hatred keeps pace with my hourly increasing passion," resumed the knight; "fate is proverbially perverse to lovers. Let me then waste words no longer. You are, at this moment, the mistress of your destiny. Let me remind you that, upon one subject in times gone by, there was sympathy between us. To be the creator of an empire in the desert, was a great thought, which created the same lofty emotion in your bosom as in my own."

"You know better even than myself," replied Esther, "that pretence of sympathy between us is a mockery, but most of all, upon the subject to which you allude. I have learned to despise your hypocrisy and falsehood in all things, in nothing more than this."

"We, perhaps, have contemplated the same object from different points of view," continued Gardiner, "but let that pass. Let me now inform you, that before a few months are over, this whole wilderness of New England will call me undisputed master. The whole rich province of Massachusetts is, at this moment, a manor, belonging to me alone, and transmissible to my descendants forever. All the efforts of these besotted Puritans are silently inuring to my benefit, and this infant empire, with all its inappreciable future of wealth and grandeur, belongs to me alone."

"These are the ravings of a madman," said Esther, looking with mingled fear and wonder at the dark countenance of her companion.

"Believe it not, beautiful Esther," he continued, with a little more excitement of manner, but in the same deliberate accents. "I am no enthusiastic visionary. My kingdom is of this world. My schemes are positive, solid, material, not the delusive raptures of a dreamer. I repeat that, at this moment, the choice is in your own hands."

"You can offer me nothing but misery, perdition, infamy,"

said Esther, who seemed to feel the icy hand of death upon her heart, as she contemplated her forlorn position.

"I have received letters within these three hours," continued Gardiner. "Had not the incorrigible and mischievous recklessness of one of my agents, thrown many obstacles in my way, my plot would not have been so long in ripening. Know, however, that the boasted patent of your colony is not worth the parchment upon which it is written, that thousands of men and millions of money are to be instantly placed at my disposal, and that ere six months have past, I shall be proclaimed hereditary Lord Proprietor and Palatine of Massachusetts, and Governor-General and Admiral of all New England."

"Is the blessed charter indeed revoked?" murmured Esther, feeling, in spite of her own fearful position, a pang of regret at the downfall of the great cause.

"Aye, the charter is worthless and already annulled!" exclaimed Gardiner, scrupling not to hazard a falsehood, which he, however, believed would shortly become a truth, "and it is now for you to decide. Forget the disdain and the hatred with which you have repaid my passion, and condescend to partake the power, to share the councils, and to direct the destiny of one who adores you, as man never worshipped before."

"Never, never!" cried Esther, shutting her eyes and holding up both her hands, as if to hide some dreadful vision.

"Be not too hasty," quietly resumed the knight, "the wife of the Lord Palatine of the Massachusetts, will hold no mean position, and have no little amount of human happiness within her high control. Wild though her domains, at this instant, may be, an empire which stretches across a continent, and plants its feet upon two oceans, is worthy to occupy an ambitious soul. Of this wide territory you shall be mistress."

"Your words are vain and idle," replied Esther, with cold and icy contempt, "now that I understand your trifling and

vulgar ambition, your sordid schemes, I loathe you more than ever. I never will be your wife."

"Then live to be my hand-maid, my bond-woman, my slave!" cried the knight in ungovernable passion, "refuse to be the sharer, the controller of my destiny, and since it likes thee better, be the plaything and the solace of my lighter hours. You are at this moment irrevocably within my power. I accept not your decision now, but accord you six hours of deliberation. Escape is impossible, and I leave you to deliberate at your leisure."

Uttering these concluding words in a gentler tone, the knight subduing his emotion by a powerful effort, arose, saluted Esther respectfully, and then left the apartment. His prisoner heard him fasten the door securely behind him, and then, exhausted with the agitating events and emotions of the last few hours, she sank back almost insensible.

How long she remained in this condition she could not tell. A keen sensation of her fearful position suddenly aroused her from her trance. She found herself still alone, and collecting all her strength, she moved rapidly about the apartment, examining the doors and windows, to see if there were no possibility of escape. Alas! every thing had been too securely fastened, and the efforts of a weak, solitary woman, were utterly hopeless. The house where she was a prisoner, and which was no other than the deserted palace of Merry-Mount, was surrounded, as she saw, by an expanse of hill and dale in one direction, by the boundless forest in another, and by the sea upon the third. But although she saw no means of making her way homeward, utterly ignorant as she was of the place of her imprisonment, yet a death in the forest would have been welcomed with rapture in preference to the doom which seemed impending over her.

But she at last felt convinced that escape from the room where she was a prisoner, was utterly hopeless. Exhausted and de-

spairing, she again fell into a half insensible state. It seemed to her that her reason was slowly yielding to the fearful excitement of that day, and an irresistible and benumbing lethargy seemed taking possession of her senses.

In this apathetic and bewildered state she remained for hours. She was at last again aroused to a consciousness of her situation by a movement upon the outside of the door. In another moment, Sir Christopher Gardiner stood again in her presence.

She shuddered convulsively as he approached, but had no strength to utter a syllable, when he inquired in the most courteous and honied accents, if she were not inclined at last to relent in her determination. Gardiner, vexed at her silence, paced up and down the room, his brain whirling with a thousand conflicting passions, but ever and anon paused in his disturbed and impetuous career, to satiate his eyes with a long, ardent gaze at his victim's beauty.

Suddenly he threw himself with apparent frenzy at her feet.

"Why will you compel to crime," he exclaimed in passionate accents, "one who would willingly live your slave forever? Maddened by your beauty beyond control of every law, divine or human, even thus abjectly do I implore you to recall your fatal decision."

Tears of wild passion flowed like burning lava down the knight's dusky cheek, he wrung his hands in frantic supplication, he kissed her feet, her garments, he raised his eyes towards her face, as if he lay in devout prostration before an enshrined divinity.

"Not to me, kneel not to me," murmured Esther faintly, finding a voice at last, "not to me, but to thy God. Pray to the Omnipotent, to crush in his mercy, the demon to whom thou hast devoted thyself, soul and body."

An indescribable sneer succeeded the softer expression upon

Gardiner's swarthy features. He sprang to his feet, and extended his arms towards Esther. At that instant a shrill and peculiar whistle was heard without.

"Confusion!" muttered the knight, springing to the door. "What means Skettwarroes by this sudden signal? ——"

Thrusting his pistols hastily into his belt, and drawing his rapier, he threw open the door, and advanced cautiously a few steps outside. Quick as light did Esther, recovering all her energy, follow his footsteps through the doorway before he had time in his surprise to draw the bolts. She was ready to brave every unknown danger, rather than remain an instant longer in the hated presence of her persecutor. Gardiner had already strained his eyes in every direction, but had seen no trace of the suspected enemy. The shadows of a winter's afternoon, however, had already gathered over the boundless forest, by which the house was inclosed on three sides, so that it was difficult precisely to ascertain from whence the danger was to be anticipated.

He had answered the signal of the faithful Skettwarroes, who occupied the look-out upon the watch tower, and with whom he exchanged a few unintelligible words, when suddenly he observed that Esther had already reached and unfastened the small door which opened through the palisade. He sprang forward like lightning, dashed through the gate in her pursuit, and seized her in his arms just as she was on the point of plunging into the forest.

"By your leave, lady mine," said he, "I cannot relinquish my prize so readily, though 't was a pretty sortie, I confess."

Esther screamed and struggled with all her spirit and strength. The hope of escape, which had been so nearly accomplished, yielding thus suddenly to despair, seemed to produce a frenzy in her soul, and to endow her frame for an instant with preternatural strength.

"Exhaust thyself not," said the knight, "with these idle struggles. Indeed, thou must back to thy cage again, my pretty bird of paradise. Nay, nay, be wise, there is none to help thee, beautiful Esther."

"'T is false, cowardly ruffian!" suddenly exclaimed a voice, hoarse with passion, but whose well known accents fell like music upon Esther's ear. At the same time an elastic form bounded like a tiger from the thicket, seized Gardiner by the throat, and hurled him to the ground. Esther uttered a feeble exclamation, and then sank insensible into the arms of Henry Maudsley.

The knight, although taken by surprise, was upon his feet again in an instant. He strode forward to punish the intruder, who, occupied at that instant with the fainting Esther, seemed hardly capable of defending himself. Suddenly, upon perceiving the features of the supposed stranger, the knight paused, with his sword uplifted in his hand, and stood motionless as if changed to stone, with features grown suddenly rigid in their passionate convulsions, and with eyes gleaming with strange and unnatural fire.

In the mean time, while Maudsley stood, with the senseless form of Esther in his arms, frantically imploring her to look up for a single moment, and while the knight stood spell-bound and immovable before him, several figures emerged from the forest, and silently ascended the slightly elevated, but upon one side, somewhat precipitous platform or ledge, upon which the group was accidentally stationed.

Before the knight could recover his self-possession, he saw himself surrounded by six or seven well armed soldiers, who had been sent by the magistrates to arrest him.

They stood in a circle around him, looking towards Maudsley for further orders. An unarmed person in Puritan hat and cloak, who had accompanied the party apparently in the

character of guide, seemed desirous of concealing himself from observation.

Gardiner at last seemed to awake from his trance, and to look around upon the grim figures, who, arrayed in steel cap and corslet, and armed with matchlock and rapier, had gathered in such formidable numbers about him, with an expression of contempt.

"Little do I regard the malice of these crop-eared blood-hounds," he muttered, grasping his rapier convulsively in his hand; "the living move me not, no, nor the dead!"

"No!" continued he in a hollow voice, with features expressive of a profound horror, but with an attitude of desperate determination — "no, though the grave gives up its dead; though hell itself hurl back its victims to affright me, even then and thus do I defy thee, Harry Maudsley!"

The knight would have sprung forward, but at a nod of Maudsley, three men-at-arms laid hold of Gardiner, who submitted patiently to be held for a moment, while Maudsley spoke.

"Be assured," said he, "that 'tis no preternatural apparition who addresses you, but a man in flesh and blood, as real as your own. There will be ample leisure hereafter to explain why and how my recovery from the wound received at your hands was kept a secret from you ———"

"Verily, Sir Christopher," cried a shrill voice suddenly interrupting Maudsley at this point, "verily, I made a grave as you desired upon the solitary beach, but the tenant, look you, was wanting, so I even buried the secret within it, and closed my mouth and the grave at the same moment."

"Perfidious liar!" exclaimed the knight, starting as if a serpent had stung him, and glaring furiously at the malicious, mocking countenance of Peter Cakebread, who had hitherto eluded his observation.

"Nay, nay, most worthy chevalier," continued the mischievous Cakebread, with a leer and a chuckle, "thou didst procure me once an ignominious and most painful chastisement. I have made thee wait a long time for payment, but I was even determined to leave no stone unturned, to return the obligation in one way or another. Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord! a text which I learned from my new masters, although I do not yet correctly apply my learning, perhaps."

"If then," cried Gardiner, turning furiously towards Maudsley, "you have, in truth, escaped the death to which I supposed you long since a victim, you can now, at least, have neither right nor inclination to defer an instant longer, the conclusion of our quarrel, which, if it had not been deadly before, would have been aggravated by to-day's events. Order these armed attendants of yours to retire."

"No, Sir Knight," said Maudsley, who had gently deposited upon the ground, and wrapped in his cloak, the partially recovered form of Esther, and who had now advanced close towards his former antagonist — "No, even if a mighty change, such as you could neither understand nor dream of, had not changed the whole complexion of my life, and made me more cautious, at least, of shedding blood in private quarrel, still would I scorn to lift my sword against such a thing as you are proved to be."

"Insolent reptile!" exclaimed Gardiner, fiercely.

"All taunts are idle," continued Maudsley. "I met you once as a knightly gentleman, in honorable combat. I stand here now commissioned to arrest you as a malefactor."

"What means this insolence?" exclaimed the knight, in husky tones, and with a strange pallor upon his swarthy cheek.

"Your own guilty soul tells you my meaning plainly enough," exclaimed Maudsley, yielding at last to his long suppressed rage. "Know then that I have not in vain concealed my existence from you; know that I have not in vain employed the long,

weary, perplexed months of my absence. I have unravelled the whole web of your villany, and have returned to brand and chastise you, as you deserve."

"The boy raves," said Gardiner, with a hollow laugh.

"Aye, blaspheme not, struggle not, deny thyself not," continued Maudsley. As surely as thou knowest me to be Henry Maudsley, so surely do I know thee to be Sir Fulk de Gorges, expelled and branded brother of the knights Hospitaller of St. John of Malta, husband of Lady Clara Hoveden, husband of Edith Maudsley, and murderer of her father and herself. Are you answered now?"

The knight's dark eye seemed to emit sparks of fire as he glared at Maudsley, but he was still silent.

"Aye, aye," cried the shrill voice of Cakebread, "and know, moreover, that all your papers are at this moment in the hands of the magistrates. A divine hand hath directed my humble researches, and the magic rod hath revealed to me the golden treasures of Shawmut. The officers have paid a visit, under my guidance, to your hermitage upon the bay. They have secured the person of the fair Magdalen Groves, commonly called your cousin, Master Jaspar, and have burned your house to the ground. All your plotting with the savages, particularly your foul connection with the great conspiracy revealed this summer by Sagamore John, and of which you are now known to be the instigator, all, all is discovered. Aha, aha, Sir Knight! whose back will catch the bastinado now? tell me that, tell me that."

The malicious creature, who at that moment looked like a very imp of hell, uttered a mocking laugh as he concluded, which, more than all which had been said, seemed to madden the knight's brain to frenzy, and to endow him with a giant's strength. His game was up, his plots baffled, his person revealed, his crimes divulged, the avenger panting for his prey. There was

no safety but in flight. Exerting his great muscular agility, he threw off his three captors by a sudden and dexterous movement, discharged a pistol unsuccessfully at Maudsley, stretched the grinning Cakebread, desperately wounded, at his feet, with the other, and then, with the suppleness of a tiger, threw himself with one prodigious bound over the precipitous rock upon which they stood, and plunged into the almost impenetrable thickets below.

By this movement, sudden, bewildering, apparently impossible, and which had hardly occupied a second, Maudsley, to his astonishment and rage, beheld the felon, whom he had toiled so long to convict and to apprehend, again escape him. Half a dozen shots were fired in quick succession, but evidently in vain, and then the whole party, excepting Maudsley, dashed off in hot pursuit.

However ardently he desired the capture of the knight, a legion of demons at that moment could not have moved him from the rock. The beautiful Esther, who had remained as it were in a kind of bewildered trance, suddenly revived, as he hung despairingly over her. Their eyes met.

"Dearest, dearest Maudsley, my preserver, my saviour!" she murmured, extending her arms gently towards him. Maudsley could not speak, but their lips clung to each other in a first and long embrace.

There sat the lovers, upon that rock in the wilderness, and for an instant they forgot every thing but their deep love, and their boundless joy at this meeting.

It was with a joyful although superstitious feeling, that Maudsley suddenly threw the fated chain around Esther's neck, which he had taken from the ground, where it had fallen during her last struggle with Gardiner near the palisade. He reminded her that he had sworn to return from the uttermost parts of the earth, should that talisman inform him that danger threatened

her, and he now urged her to accept it as a pledge that their hearts were no longer entangled in mysteries, but at last were united. They could have remained for hours together upon that lonely spot, but their interview was interrupted after but a few moments' duration. Half the party, who had been in pursuit of Gardiner, returned breathless and unsuccessful. It had been agreed that the others should continue the search all night. The adventurer, however, possessed such an intimate knowledge of the country in that neighborhood, beside being upon such intimate terms with many of the wandering savages, that it seemed probable the pursuit would be a protracted one, although Maudsley convinced Esther that his eventual apprehension must be certain. He bitterly regretted his want of adroitness in thus allowing the object, for which he had spent so many weary months of labor, to slip from his grasp, when he had already clutched it; but he swore to rest neither day nor night, till the malefactor was apprehended and brought to justice.

In the mean time, those of the party who had returned to Merry-Mount, prepared to execute that part of the order of the court in relation to Thomas Morton, which had hitherto remained unfulfilled. The magistrates, as will be recollected, had decreed that the luckless Lord of Merry-Mount should be set in the stocks, that he should be afterwards imprisoned until sent to England, that his property should be confiscated, and his house be burned to the ground, "in order that the habitation of the wicked should no more be seen in Israel." Morton was now in prison, hourly awaiting his transportation to England, and every other part of the sentence had been executed, excepting the ordained destruction of the Merry-Mount palace. This had, for a variety of reasons, been deferred, and the party who were that day charged, by the magistrates, with the apprehension

of Gardiner, had likewise received orders to proceed afterwards to Morton's domain, and to destroy his house.

They had already burned Gardiner's house to the ground, after having searched there unsuccessfully for its tenant, before proceeding to Merry-Mount. As has already been intimated, they had there captured the unfortunate Jaspar, and had, moreover, taken possession of a large collection of papers, including, as it afterwards appeared, a voluminous correspondence between the knight and Sir Ferdinando Gorges, in which their various intrigues and machinations were set forth, even to the minutest details.

The party had then proceeded to Merry-Mount, where their adventures with Sir Christopher have been already narrated.

By Maudsley's orders, they now proceeded to set fire to the palace, as well as to all the log huts and hovels which were scattered about Morton's domain. The buildings had previously been ransacked, by order of the magistrates, and every thing of importance removed. After the flames had fairly enveloped all the buildings, Maudsley carefully conveyed Esther to the pinnace, which was moored near the shore, and accompanied by the men-at-arms, embarked for the village of Boston. A gentle breeze was blowing, and the little vessel danced swiftly along the waves. Esther and Maudsley sat gazing at the burning palace, which, built of light and inflammable materials, was already a sheet of fire, and presented the appearanee of an extensive conflagration. The twilight was already approaching, the air was chill and mirky, the red flames glared wildly and fitfully athwart the lowering heavens, and were reflected with sullen radiance from the darkening waves. Suddenly, as they turned for a moment in another direction, they saw the large hull of an outward bound ship, which was passing very near them. A solitary person, his figure darkly painted against the

twilight, stood upon the quarter-deck, and seemed to be gazing sadly and earnestly at the distant flames. The vessel was the ship Whale, just starting upon her wintry voyage to England — the solitary spectator of the conflagration was the captive Lord of Merry-Mount.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HERMIT IN THE ASSEMBLY.

The magistrates were assembled, next day, in the rude town-hall. William Blaxton, the hermit of Shawmut, had crossed the craggy eminence which rose between his still sequestered retreat and the lowly village of Boston, in order to hold an interview, at their request, with the government of the colony. His connection with the Gorges patent had ever been rather nominal and accidental than real, and since the arrival of the new settlers, and the summary measures which had been taken in regard to Morton, Walford, Gardiner in New England, and Oldham at home, he had dismissed from his thoughts the subject concerning which he had been used occasionally to hear discussions from the mouths of Gardiner and Morton. He had certainly never much interested himself in the merits of the rival claimants to the dominion of Massachusetts. He considered himself as a pilgrim in a wilderness, a hermit in a desert, and he had a whimsical but profound contempt for every species of human authority. He had allowed himself to be whirled by an eddy entirely aside from the rushing current of human affairs, and he had long since devoted his existence to solitude and nature. Had he foreseen that the band of emigrants who, in small companies and at different intervals, had been arriving during the last two or three years, were so soon to lay the foundation of a permanent empire, and so soon to scare the spirit of sylvan solitude from the lovely peninsula where he had established his home, it is probable that he might have attempted some means of counteracting their plans by any fair and amicable

arrangement that was possible. He considered himself the sole proprietor of Shawmut, or, as it was now called, Boston, by right of occupation. He was the first Englishman who had ever slept upon the peninsula, and he had dwelt there in undisturbed dominion during five or six years. His gentle nature, however, having been touched by the sufferings of the colonists at Charlestown, he had voluntarily gone over to the governor and expressly invited them to his peninsula, assuring them of the sufficiency at least of fair water-springs, which were so much wanting at Mishawum. Although the governor of the colony considered that the dominion and property of the soil of Shawmut belonged unquestionably to themselves, yet the just and magnanimous mind of Winthrop could not brook the thought of any injustice towards the hermit, although the question of summarily ousting him from his adverse possession was fiercely contended for by the more intolerant of the brethren. The town had been, however, commenced, and the lots were soon to be apportioned; but it was determined by the governor that an ample portion of the territory should be assigned to Blaxton, which, in a worldly point of view, now that a permanent settlement had been made, would be of more value than the whole peninsula, had it remained a wilderness. It was not probable, however, that considerations like these would have any great weight with the whimsical hermit. He already feared that his dearly loved solitude was lost to him forever, should he remain at Shawmut; but he shrank at present from the thought of relinquishing a spot where he had dwelt so long.

It was for the purpose of conferring with the magistrates upon matters of this kind, that he had made his appearance in the town-hall that morning. The conference had been long and desultory, for the character of Blaxton was singularly uncongenial to that of the majority of the magistrates, and they had found not a little difficulty in understanding each other.

"It is therefore understood," said Winthrop, with whom the hermit seemed to feel the most sympathy, "it is understood that fifty acres be set apart for your own use, Master Blaxton, including the tract more particularly occupied by your domicile."

"Acres, acres," muttered Blaxton, dreamily, "the thought of admeasurements, and fences, and allotments, confoundeth me. I had forgotten that men carved up and subdivided in petty portions the green and beautiful earth. I have sojourned so long in the boundless wilderness, where my territory was wide as the continent, as unfettered as my thoughts, that I am become a child, and can hardly understand the ways of men."

"But we mean nothing but brotherly dealing," said Winthrop, "fair dealing and strict justice."

"I never dreamed," said Blaxton, in a pathetic tone, "that my boundless territory would be contracted. I looked to have dwelt with my orchards, and my books, and my young fawn, and my bull, in undisturbed and harmless solitude. This new world, they tell me, is very wide. Was there not room enough for ye all? Could ye not leave the hermit in his corner?"

"Your fifty acre lot," said Winthrop, practically but kindly, "will soon be of more account and value than twenty wilderness promontories like this ——"

"What tell ye me of value?" interrupted the hermit, pettishly. "I tell ye I am like a child in affairs of this world. I have dwelt so long in the wilderness, that the voices of many men sound strangely to me. I love my kind I believe, and would serve them if I could, but look you, I cannot live with them. My soul lacks air, and cannot brook confinement. I am a peaceable man, and have never injured living thing, and yet my spirit rebels at all law, and cannot bear the dictates of any power but those of the Most High."

"Laws, my reverend friend," remonstrated Winthrop, "are surely necessary to the preservation of society. Shall wolves

and lambs, lions and kids, dwell together, and yet the fiercer animals not be restrained?"

"I cannot abide with ye, I fear," said Blaxton, following, as was his wont, his own train of thought, and heeding little the words which were addressed to him; "I cannot obey the laws of man's making. 'T is for this I left my fathers' graves, and buried myself in the desert. I am not of your religion neither."

"We shall soon bring thee round," interrupted Dudley, peremptorily; "we will have no spies in the company, no recusants, no blasphemers of our church. We have not come hither to find surplices and copes in the wilderness, nor to hear the mass-book chanted in the forest."

"Gently, brother Dudley," interposed Winthrop, "our reverend, learned, and contemplative friend hath acted towards us in a most friendly and Christian spirit; let us have no contentions upon religious matters yet."

"Men are law-makers and tyrants by nature," continued the hermit, "even as tigers are carnivorous. When the lion dandleth the kid, shall I hope to repose calmly in the lap of civil authority. No, my masters," said he, facing the magistrates in an attitude of simple dignity, and slightly elevating his voice, "no, my masters, I came from England because I could not obey the Lord bishops; but I fear I cannot dwell with you, for I can never obey the Lord brethren."

Dudley frowned as the eccentric solitary made this last observation, and was upon the point of uttering some harsh rejoinder, when the door opened, and the sergeant announced that the prisoner, whose presence their worships had desired, was now in attendance.

"Let her be brought before the court," said Winthrop; and a female was accordingly introduced, wearing a thick veil, and wrapped in a dark mantle, which quite concealed her form. Thus attired, she stood in front of the magistrates' table.

In the mean time a number of colonists, directed thither partly by curiosity, partly by other motives, had found their way into the hall. Among the rest were Maudsley and the Ludlows, who gazed upon the proceedings with great earnestness.

"The prisoner will declare her name," said the imperious voice of Dudley.

An indistinct murmur was heard, which failed to reach the ears of the magistrates.

"The prisoner will remove her veil," said Dudley.

The order was complied with, and the woman throwing aside her veil, revealed a face of extraordinary loveliness.

It was a strange, almost a patriarchal scene. That rude apartment thronged with its earnest, darkly-habited spectators, the stern, but expressive heads of the magistrates, and in the midst of all, and gazed upon with breathless curiosity by all, the shrinking figure of that young, beautiful, desolate woman.

Blaxton, who had been upon the point of retiring, as soon as his conference with the magistrates was concluded, had been accidentally detained for a few moments within the hall. As the prisoner lifted up her veil, his wandering eyes happened to be turned in that direction. As her countenance met his view he was observed to turn pale as ashes. Incapable for the moment of speech or motion, he stood for a brief interval transfixed and horror-struck, as if a thunderbolt had suddenly descended from heaven. At last he aroused himself, and feeling that a solution of many mysteries which had perplexed him, was near at hand, be glided close to the prisoner, and gazed long and wistfully upon her.

"Art thou not Magdalen Groves, of Boirdly?" said he at last.

"I am," said the woman, gently but firmly, answering the gaze of Blaxton with an earnest and imploring look.

"They told me thou wert dead," said the solitary.

"Thou wert deceived, basely, treacherously deceived," answered Magdalen, in a low and trembling voice.

"And hadst thou part and lot in the deceit?" asked the hermit.

There was no reply. The woman sighed heavily, but was silent.

"I am answered," said the hermit, "the mystery is solved. And so without saying a single word further, he took his staff and went forth to his hermitage again.

The examination of the prisoner now proceeded. A variety of interrogatories were addressed to her, but her answers were brief and unsatisfactory. She knew nothing, she said, of the present retreat of Gardiner, and trembled violently at every question concerning him or his plans. All that could be elicited from her in answer to their various queries, was, that she believed the knight to be a Catholic, and that she had understood him to be descended from the family of Stephen Gardiner, the celebrated Bishop of Winchester. Touching Sir Ferdinando Gorges, she knew nothing, and she had nothing to communicate concerning the intrigues of Thomas Morton, with whom she acknowledged some slight acquaintance.

The possession of the papers which had been so recently delivered to the magistrates, and which had been found in Gardiner's house, seemed to throw so much light upon the whole history of the Gorges plot, that it seemed to them unnecessary to pursue the examination of the prisoner further. Her conduct was so close and impenetrable, and she really seemed to know so little concerning the designs and the whereabouts of the knight, that it seemed necessary to defer all further hope of entirely unravelling the business, until the apprehension of Sir Christopher Gardiner, as we must continue to call him, who was not yet taken, and who was supposed to have fled to the savages.

"The prisoner may be removed," said the governor.

"Let her be kept in prison, and watched strictly," said Dudley, "till her paramour be taken. Remove her at once, Sergeant Underwood."

"Perhaps," said the governor, wishing to deal in more gentle fashion with the prisoner, "there may be some virtuous and well-disposed Christian matron who may be willing to take upon herself the custody and the care of the prisoner, till such time as the court may again require her presence."

There were a number of females present, among whom were observed the two respectable matrons who had not long previously been exhibited with their heads in a cage. All, however, more especially that worthy pair, tossed their chins in the air, and manifested a superfluous quantity of indignation at the contamination thus suggested.

The sergeant was approaching to lead the unfortunate prisoner away, when Esther advancing from the corner where she had been watching the whole proceeding with tearful eyes, said modestly to the governor,—

"If the magistrates permit, I will readily offer the shelter of my roof to our unfortunate sister. My brother and myself will deal kindly with her, and will be responsible for her appearance when the court desire it."

Magdalen Groves, who had stood like a statue of ice during the latter part of this scene, chilled to the heart by the freezing looks which met her upon every side, at hearing these few words of womanly and Christian sympathy, trembled violently from head to foot, and would have fallen, had not Esther received her in her arms. For a few moments the unfortunate and deserted woman seemed overcome by silent but convulsive emotions.

After a time, however, she recovered her composure by a strong and energetic effort, and then, supported by Esther, she silently withdrew from the hall.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ADVENTURER'S FORTUNES.

Sir Ferdinando Gorges was the head of an ancient family, which deduced its origin, in unbroken masculine descent, from Fulques de Gorges, a Norman Knight, who came into England under the banner of William the Conqueror.

A younger branch of the house, swerving from its allegiance to the red rose of Lancaster, had been ennobled in the reign of Edward IV.

More than a century afterwards, an intermarriage had taken place between the two principal branches of the family. Lord Gorges of Ashford, the representative of the barony, and Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the acknowledged head of the family, were cousins. Both were rich, and both were devoted to the cause of church and king. Sir Ferdinando had never been married; Lord Gorges of Ashford had espoused, early in life, a daughter of Hugh Gardiner, of Clopton, a Somersetshire gentleman, who was descended from a brother of the celebrated Stephen Gardiner, the supple and subtle Bishop of Winchester, in the reign of Henry VIII., and of his successors.

From this marriage there had sprung several children. The youngest, the honorable Fulk de Gorges, had been a wayward and unmanageable creature almost from his birth. Rebellious and yet subtle, scheming, incomprehensible, perverse, licentious, deceitful, he had been, during his wild boyhood, a constant source of anxiety and sorrow to his parents. At the age of seventeen, he had quitted his paternal mansion in a fit of ungovernable anger, and had passed a few wandering months upon the

continent. By means of his father's powerful influence, he was at the expiration of this time admitted, at his own ardent desire, as a page in the order of the Knights of St. John, at Malta. Although the order, like all other monastic institutions, had been deprived and abolished in England, under Henry VIII., yet Englishmen of rank were still admitted into the fraternity, and the young de Gorges, finding no difficulty in proving the necessary four generations of nobility, was entered in the commandery of Toulon, of course in the language of England.

His bravery, his remarkable talents, his great skill in the profession of arms, whether exercised upon sea or shore, soon won him an exalted place among the Hospitallers. The impetuosity of his temper, the mischievous restlessness of his brain, and the licentiousness of his manners, remarkable even in an order already signalized in its decay by extraordinary depravity, had, however, acquired for him almost as much distinction among his brethren, as had his nobler qualities.

In many a bloody fight with the pirates of Dalmatia, the mercenaries of Austria, or the squadrons of the Sultan, he had led the war galleys of his order to victory. Disappointed, however, in his election to the post of grand master, for which he had skilfully and almost successfully intrigued, he had abandoned himself to an uncontrollable rage; had torn the cross from his shoulder, trampled it under his feet, insulted his brethren, and made his escape by a stroke of unparalleled and fortunate audacity, before the punishment for his unpardonable conduct could be inflicted upon him.

After this epoch he appears to have dwelt for a long time in Venice. It is, however, quite impossible, and would be, perhaps, irrelevant to attempt even a hurried sketch of his adventurous life. His memoirs, could they have been given to the world, would have formed a checkered, mysterious, and romantic piece of biography. For the sake of indicat-

ing only the manner in which his fortunes had been connected with those of several personages who have figured in our pages, we will but briefly glance at a few points in his career. He had dwelt long in Venice. As already hinted at in some of the earlier chapters of this work, he had been the chief instrument of the celebrated mock conspiracy against the republic, and real plot against Naples, in which the Duke d'Ossuna had reposed implicit confidence in the crafty Englishman alone. As a bare-footed monk, moving unsuspected from city to city, he had passed to and fro between Naples and Venice, and his identity with the brilliant and gallant Cavaliere di San Giorgio, by which name he had been known as a celebrated commander of picked condottieri in the service of the republic, had never been suspected. Although the conspiracy had proved unsuccessful, the chevalier had found no reason to regret his connection with the Duke d'Ossuna, who was munificent in his gratitude, and who remained always his most useful and powerful friend. He had subsequently to these events, while employed upon a secret and confidential mission from the republic to the court of Rome, become acquainted with an English family of rank then residing in Italy. Lady Clara Hoveden fell desperately in love with the accomplished Cavaliere di San Giorgio, who accordingly bestowed upon her his monkish hand in marriage. Perhaps he might have obtained a dispensation from the Pope, but he apparently did not consider it worth his while; for, after a few brilliant years, during which his wife inherited a peerage in her own right which added a lustre to their position, and a princely fortune, which he demolished in princely fashion, he one fine day decamped, nobody knew whither, leaving only a few debts, and a letter for Lady Clara. In this epistle, remarkable for its eloquent brevity, he informed his cara sposa, that the vows taken at his entrance into the Hospital of St. John rendered their mutual vows at the altar of comparatively little value. It was

no act of generosity upon his part to absolve her from her obligations, because, in reality, they had never existed.

At this epoch, he disappeared in a cloud to rise again in the east, and although nothing was absolutely known about him, it seems certain that he had for several years worn the turban, and acquired much celebrity in the armies of the grand Seignior.

His oriental residence seems to have confirmed him in a natural taste for polygamy, and accordingly, after various adventures of flood, field, and bower, which befel him during his six or seven years' residence in the east, we find him in the year 1623 leading a second English bride to the altar. This occurred in Paris, where he had made his appearance as Sir Fulk de Gorges, as suddenly as if he had been thrown there out of a volcano. Nobody knew whence he came. Many disputed his identity and denied his claim to the name he bore, although such free-thinkers were singularly cautious in expressing their skepticism to his face. His father, who had not heard of him for nearly fifteen years, had lately died, having first taken the precaution to disinherit him of his younger brother's portion. His striking appearance, romantic history, mysterious character, and brilliant qualities, made a vivid impression upon the young and impressionable mind of Edith Maudsley, whom he met at the court of Versailles. Her father, the representative of an ancient and wealthy family in Wiltshire, had but two children, Henry Maudsley and herself. His consent was reluctantly gained to the marriage of his daughter with the singular adventurer who had fascinated her; and had not her brother been, during this period, serving in the Low Countries and in Germany, it was probable that the marriage, notwithstanding the satisfactory evidences of his rank which Sir Fulk was enabled to adduce, would have been violently set aside. Henry Maudsley, however, was unfortunately in little communication with his family or with any one at that time. It happened to be exactly the epoch

of his first and unsuccessful love for Esther Ludlow, and at that time, engrossed by his own emotions, he was fiercely courting a soldier's grave in a foreign land.

To hurry briefly to the conclusion of this rapid sketch of the knight's biography, the newly married couple passed a year very happily together, partly upon the continent, and partly at Mandsley Court and in London. During an occasional tour by himself in the land of his nativity, it so happened that Sir Fulk fell in with the beautiful daughter of an English clergyman, whom he had once known in Italy. The father, who had been chaplain to a British embassy, had resided many years in Tuscany, and his daughter, naturally of a romantic turn, educated in a romantic land, was both by temperament and circumstances exactly the person to be fascinated by the graces of the all-accomplished chevalier, with whom an acquaintance, began in her childhood, upon the banks of the yellow Arno, was suddenly and unexpectedly renewed in the solitude of Shropshire.

She was at the time acquainted with a worthy but eccentric young man, a graduate of Cambridge, who had recently taken orders in the church. Her father had been desirous that she should have been united with him, although the young man, who was no other than William Blaxton, afterwards the eccentric hermit of Shawmut, does not appear to have been much more violently inclined to the match than was the fair Magdalen herself. They were however acquainted, and but for this accidental visit of the adventurous Sir Fulk de Gorges at this obscure village, the tenor of the lives of both might have been far different.

This incident happened to occur but a few weeks previously to a great domestic catastrophe at Mandsley Court. It so chanced, that a certain Lady Hoveden (sometimes called di San Georgio), one day made a pilgrimage to that retired manor house. Although her Alpheus, reversing the ancient fable, had

sunk, as he thought, to the bottom of the Mediterranean, to escape his Arethusa, he had been traced through all his doublings, and the deserted and insulted peeress, after years of baffled pursuit, had almost come up with the traitor at last.

The consequences of an interview between Lady de Gorges first and second, may be imagined. The gentle Edith Maudsley, learning that she had not only been married to a monk, but that the monk had already another wife, was wholly unable to survive the blow. The fearful intelligence was like fire to her brain, and she died in a delirious fever within a few weeks. Her father, old as he was, went forth to seek his daughter's destroyer, who, as already stated, was then absent. A fearful mystery, and one that was never fathomed, hung over the old man's fate. All which was known, was, that he had been last seen in the presence of Sir Fulk de Gorges. Nothing more was known, nothing more could ever be proved; but the old man, living or dead, was never seen again. When Henry Maudsley returned to his father's house, he found it desolate. His sister was laid in a dishonored grave, and his father had perished by an unknown fate. He had searched long, and in vain, for the miscreant whose fearful crimes had entailed so much misery upon a happy fireside, so much disgrace upon an ancient house.

Sir Fulk's person was unknown to him, although he had a vague impression of having seen him, when he himself was but a child. It was, therefore, rather the awakening of a vanished sensation, than a pure antipathy, which, as we have seen, occasioned him to doubt and suspect the unknown adventurer when he first met him in New England.

Maudsley, however, sought for the fugitive in vain. Sir Fulk, fortunately for himself, had been, as we have before stated, absent from home at the memorable interview between his two wives; and after a frantic and prolonged search in England and

on the continent, Henry Maudsley had been obliged for a season to desist from the pursuit.

In the mean time Sir Fulk, assuming the name of his maternal family, had appeared in Madrid as Sir Christopher Gardiner. His friend, the Duke d'Ossuna, who, better than any one else, was aware of the frequency with which he assumed a variety of characters, and the ability with which he supported them, was not at all surprised or unwilling to recognise, in the English Chevalier Gardiner, his old and trusty acquaintance, the Cavaliere di San Giorgio, and proved as well disposed towards his former confidant as ever.

It was observed by the curious impertinents of Madrid, that the chevalier was attended by a young and very handsome page, who appeared exceedingly attached to his master, and desirous of avoiding the acquaintance of others. Magdalen Groves had, in fact, fallen an easy victim to the inconstant and capricious knight, who, at the very moment when the two noble dames, whom he had led to the altar, were disputing the priority of their claims to his hand, found it excessively amusing to carry off this romantic damsel, in the very face of the furious pursuit which he knew would be opened upon him.

Deceived by a false marriage ceremony, the unfortunate girl had willingly followed the fortunes of the mysterious object of her idolatry. Unlike the two other dames, to whom his troth had been plighted, Magdalen, upon being frankly informed, upon their arrival at Madrid, of the true position of matters, asked but a single question. She was born to be the slave of passion, and all she worshipped in the world, was love. If she was loved, a Puritan could not have looked upon wedlock's symbols with greater indifference, than she did both upon symbols and reality. She felt no resentment for the treachery which had been practised upon her, because she still allowed herself to be persuaded that love, imperishable love, the

golden treasure for which she was willing to sacrifice her all on earth, and all her hopes of heaven, had been the cause of all, and that it still remained unchanged, unchangeable. To her the whole world was henceforth nothing, and she would rather have lived the slave of that unworthy knight, than the wife of an emperor. Without a murmur, therefore, at the intolerable deceit to which she had been a victim, and which she was now called upon to practise with regard to others, she allowed a fictitious and circumstantial account of her death to be reported in her native village. The tale, supported by forged testimonials, was made to appear so credible, that her few relatives and friends were entirely deceived. A simple monument, recording her virtues and her early doom, was erected in the obscure church-yard at Boirdly, and many a prayer for the repose of Magdalen Groves was uttered by sincere but deluded lips.

The other adventures of Sir Fulk de Gorges, or, as we prefer still to designate him, Sir Christopher Gardiner, we pass over in silence. We would simply observe that, some two years after his flight from England, his first interview with Sir Ferdinando Gorges occurred in Madrid, and that after a certain time spent in studying the old knight's character, and in discussing his New England schemes, Sir Christopher decided upon revealing himself to his kinsman, after first exacting from him a pledge of secrecy. Sir Ferdinando found that he had, at last, discovered exactly the man for his purpose. Sir Christopher found an inexpressible charm in these projects of enterprise, in a new and untried field. His adventurous temperament and intriguing disposition, were all excited by the vigorous conceptions of his kinsman. It was an age of romance and adventure. Their deliberations were held in Spain, the land of chivalry, their projects were to be carried out in the fabulous El Dorado of the West. Bent upon rivaling Cortes and Pizarro, Sir Walter Raleigh, and John Smith himself, Sir

Christopher engaged enthusiastically in the projects of Sir Ferdinando. It was, moreover, especially convenient for him to absent himself, for a term of years, from Europe. He had exhausted the golden Orient already, the West was full of new and enticing adventure. After considerable delays, the necessary arrangements were made, and Sir Christopher, accompanied by his page and a few servants, among whom was Skettwarroes the Indian, who had been captured in America, sold as a slave in Spain, and rescued by Sir Ferdinando, made his first appearance in the Massachusetts.

The rest of his adventures the reader knows. How all his plans were baffled, how his gorgeous visions faded before the obscure and repulsive reality, how the enthusiast of worldly pomp and power, saw with bitterness the foundations of an empire laid before his eyes, by enthusiasts of a deeper and a sterner sort, while his own energies were doomed to rust in the most harassing inactivity, all this has sufficiently appeared.

If this early chapter of New England annals has any meaning in it, it certainly illustrates the peculiar character of the Massachusetts settlement. Colonies of every other variety had been sent to that inhospitable region, but not an impression had been made upon its iron bosom. It was reserved for exalted, unflinching, self-sacrificing, iron-handed, despotic, stern, truculent, bigoted, religious enthusiasts, men who were inspired by one idea, but that a great idea, and who were willing to go through fire and water, and to hew down with axes all material, animal, or human obstacles, in the path which led to the development of their idea; it was reserved for such men to accomplish what neither trading companies, nor fishing companies, nor land companies, nor schemers of satrapsies, nor dreamers of palatinates, were able to effect. It was a great movement, not a military, nor a philanthropic, nor a demo-

cratic movement, but a religious, perhaps a fanatical movement, but the movers were in earnest, and the result was an empire. The iron character of these early founders left an impression upon their wilderness-world, which has not yet been effaced; and the character of their institutions, containing much that is admirable, mingled with many objectionable features, has diffused an influence, upon the whole, healthy and conservative, throughout the length and breadth of the continent.

We have witnessed, moreover, the singular manner in which the fortunes of Gardiner became entangled with that of the other leading characters who have figured in these pages, and the striking fatality by which he was so suddenly brought face to face, in that lonely desert, with the avenger of his crimes. Hardly less singular was the re-appearance, to the eyes of the dreaming Blaxton, of one whom he had known in her innocent youth, who, he thought, had long been consigned to the tomb, and for the repose of whose soul he had himself offered many a prayer. It was no wonder that the vision had at first appalled him, and that he had found it difficult, for a long time, to shake off the impression that he had been in communion with a visitant from the spiritual world.

As for Henry Maudsley, at the moment when he left the shores of New England, believing that the mysterious knight had found the means of ingratiating himself in the affections both of Walter Ludlow and his sister, he had received but a clue only to the character of the adventurer, by the papers brought to him by Cakebread. It was impossible for him to resist the sacred voice which seemed to cry out to him from the tomb, to lose no time, and to omit no possible step which might lead to the unravelling of these dark mysteries. Convinced, however, as we have seen, that the heart of Esther was irrevocably lost to him, he had not trusted himself to see her before his departure; and moreover, even if a full and free understand-

ing had taken place between them, which might easily have happened, he would have felt under a no less imperious necessity to hasten across the sea, without delay, to commence at once an investigation into matters of such deep import.

We have seen how the very first letter from him which reached the Ludlows, opened the way for a full and candid explanation of all causes of difference between himself and Esther. Thereafter, the interchange of letters was as frequent as in those days was possible between the old world and the wilderness; but Maudsley, in the prosecution of his inquiries, was obliged to consume more time, and to traverse a greater space than he had at first anticipated. When he at last made his appearance again at so opportune a moment, in New England, he had fortified himself with the necessary proofs and documents to warrant the apprehension of Gardiner, and his transportation to England for trial. His chagrin at the evasion of the knight at a moment when he was himself so busily occupied in sustaining his long-lost Esther, may be easily imagined.

CHAPTER XX.

MAGDALEN'S REQUIEM.

The afternoon of the day upon which the examination of Magdalen Groves before the magistrates had taken place, was gloomy and threatening. No snow had yet fallen since the commencement of the winter, but there were now indications of a storm.

The unfortunate and deserted woman accompanied Esther, with whom as well as with Maudsley, it will be recollected, she had had previous but mysterious interviews, to her own residence. Her mind seemed, however, in an apathetic condition, as if the severity of the blows, which had been inflicted upon her, had left her almost insensible. Her replies to the kind words spoken to her by Esther, Walter Ludlow, and Maudsley were brief and unsatisfactory. She appeared humble and grateful, but incommunicative and preoccupied. In answer to various suggestions, she constantly repeated that she would seek out her cousin, as she continued to call Sir Christopher Gardiner.

It was naturally difficult for persons, so differently situated with regard to that adventurer, to hold any very satisfactory communion together, but Maudsley was determined that his victim should be enlightened as to his true character and his perfidy. Of his former adventures and crimes she had some knowledge, but they had made no impression upon her. She had, however, more than suspected the nature of his feelings towards Esther, and had been nearly driven to madness in consequence; but the knight, with his usual crafty eloquence, had been enabled at last to lull her jealousy to sleep, and during

their absence from Massachusetts, there had, of course, been nothing to awaken it again.

Maudsley, however, convinced that it was for the eventual repose of the deceived and deserted woman to be enlightened at last upon these topics, now, as briefly and tenderly as he could, gave her the true history of the previous day's adventure at Merry-Mount, of which she had been in profound ignorance, and informed her, moreover, of the proposal which Gardiner had made to him in a whisper, at their memorable meeting upon the beach at Shawmut.

The unfortunate woman received these tidings with a frozen stare, as if the poniard which thus struck her to the heart was so keen, that it destroyed her without inflicting a positive pang. She made no reply. Her eye seemed hot and tearless; she trembled slightly, but uttered not a syllable of complaint or reproach. The slave of love, she who had sacrificed all for love, who had pardoned treachery, coldness, cruelty, while she still believed herself the object of love, now saw herself, beyond all possibility of doubt, both despised and hated.

At her urgent entreaty, she was left to herself, for a little while. The night had already set in. The wind howled dismally through the leafless groves which surrounded the Ludlows' cottage. The indications of the afternoon had not been deceptive, and a driving, blinding, snow-storm combined with the raging wind and the benumbing cold, to make a fearful night. It seemed impossible that any living soul would willingly brave the terrors of such a tempest.

At about ten o'clock Esther looked into the room where Magdalen was still sitting, or rather crouching in the same attitude in which she had been left. As she, however, manifested considerable repugnance to any communication at present, and seemed still in a stunned and almost a lethargic state, Esther thought that it was useless to force upon her common-place

consolation which was thus decidedly rejected. Earnestly imploring her, however, to address herself to God for support and consolation, and gently advising her to seek repose, if not sleep, as soon as possible, she withdrew for the night.

About an hour afterwards, Magdalen, who had still remained motionless, in her solitary position near the hearth, where huge burning logs threw a fitful glare about the rude apartment, suddenly started to her feet, as if the whole truth had suddenly, and for the first time, glared upon her, with a horrible and unquenchable light.

"I will seek the traitor," said she to herself, in a low, hoarse voice. Without another word, and with noiseless steps, she went from the room, opened the outer door, and then glided forth, like a ghost, into the midnight storm. The snow, whirling thick and fast before the hurricane, had already, like a white deluge, changed the face of the wilderness. She moved on without a sensation of fear, for she found something congenial in that opaque and boundless gloom, while the wintry cold and the driving snow felt grateful to her burning brain. For many minutes she moved along, abandoning herself as it were to the fierce delight of mingling with an elemental tempest, as wild and desolate as that which was sweeping her soul. At last the excitement of her brain gradually began to yield before the benumbing effects of the cold, and the difficulty of making her way through the heavy drifts and the constantly increasing storm. How long and how far she had wandered, she knew not; but at last the fury of her emotions seemed to have abated, a delicious calm came over her, she sank upon the ground, breathed a prayer of forgiveness for herself for her enemies, and so fell asleep for ever. The driving hurricane wrapped her as she slept in an icy winding sheet, and the wintry wind sounded her requiem in the tossing pine branches.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

WITHIN the territory of the Plymouth colony, upon the banks of the Namaskett River, six figures lay closely concealed in a thicket of alders. Two of the individuals thus lying in ambush were officers in the service of the Massachusetts company, Captain Underhill and Lieutenant Dudley; the other four were savages. The six composed a hunting party, which, after months of unremitting search, had at last come up for the first time with their game. The game was Sir Christopher Gardiner, and after having been often baffled, they were at last upon his track.

Immediately upon his disappearance, as related in some of the preceding pages, the government of Massachusetts had sent in pursuit of him. He had, however, escaped their vigilance, and, assisted by the Indians of his neighborhood, with whom he had maintained friendly relations, he had nearly succeeded in making his escape to Virginia. The winter had, however, proved so inclement that he had been obliged to defer his expedition thither, till the opening of the spring, and in the mean time, to lead a wandering life among the savages.

Information had, however, been brought to Governor Bradford of Plymouth, by some of the Indians inhabiting that colony, of the place where the knight kept himself concealed. Communications upon the subject of the fugitive, and upon the importance of securing his person, having previously been exchanged between Bradford and the Massachusetts governor, orders were given by the magistrates of Plymouth for his imme-

diate arrest, and a considerable reward promised to his captors. Many of the Plymouth Indians, desirous of earning the proffered bounty, were very willing to undertake the adventure, provided the price were set upon his scalp.

Such was the knight's reputation for desperate courage and skill, that the attempt to secure his person alive, as was proposed by the magistrates, was considered a very hazardous undertaking. As all, however, who engaged in the pursuit, were absolutely forbidden by the government both of Massachusetts and Plymouth to take his life, the chase became more hazardous and less attractive.

Had the price been set upon his head, it was probable that it would very soon have been brought before the tribunal. As his living person was required, it became at last very doubtful whether he would be secured, and it was even supposed by many that he had already effected his escape to Virginia.

Upon a bright morning in the latter part of April, the party already mentioned lay concealed in the still leafless thickets which bordered the Namaskett River. Intelligence had been brought to them by a treacherous Indian, in whom Gardiner had been obliged to repose confidence, that he was that morning to descend the river in a canoe. The party lay with their ears close to the ground, listening and watching like blood-hounds for the faintest symptoms of his approach. At last, from a considerable distance above them, the light drip of an oar fell upon their ears. It was evident that the scout had not deceived them. The Englishmen had their rapiers and fire-arms, as usual, but the savages were provided only with long poles, to which strong hooks were attached. As the necessity of taking their game alive had been so strongly impressed upon the party, the Indians had been deprived of their customary weapons of war, lest their forbearance should be too heavily taxed.

After a few breathless moments of delay, the canoe came

slowly floating down the stream. It was Sir Christopher Gardiner indeed who sat within that frail, birchen bark, but how changed in appearance from the brilliant Sir Fulk de Gorges. His dress was squalid, his features, emaciated by fasting, vigils and exposure, were almost overgrown by his coal-black beard; while the fierce light which shone from his sunken and cavernous eyes, seemed an unholy and sepulchral flame. He appeared, however, calm and self-possessed, and his head, at the slightest rustle in the bushes, turned with its quick, snake-like movement, seeming almost to anticipate the arrival of every sound.

No sooner had the canoe floated past the lurking place of the party, than, at a nod from Captain Underhill, two of the savages plunged into the stream, and swam boldly towards the knight. Although the movement had been as stealthy and as noiseless as possible, Gardiner confronted them in an instant with his match lock at his cheek. The Indians hesitated a moment, and then one of them advanced. In another instant, there was a flash, a report, a yell, and the blood of the foremost savage dyed the placid waters of the river. The other Indian dived below the surface, and regained the shore. The knight profited by the interval to re-load his piece.

In the mean time, however, the two other Indians, running along in advance of the canoe, which was slowly floating down the sluggish river, had in their turn leaped into the water, and were now close upon the enemy; while at the same time the savage who had at first retreated, finding himself supported by his companions, had again advanced to the attack, and the three, armed with their long-hooked poles, now surrounded the canoe.

At this moment Captain Underhill emerged from the thicket, and, standing upon the edge of the river, called upon Sir Christopher Gardiner to yield to the authority of the Massachusetts company. To this the knight replied by a bullet, which struck a birch tree, within a few inches of the captain's head.

The tiger stood at bay at last, and it was evident that he meant to sell his life as dearly as possible. The odds were now five to one, and two of the five were well-armed Englishmen. Had the party not been hampered by their instructions to secure their fugitive with as little injury to his person as possible, the combat would have been of very short duration. As it was, before Gardiner had time to reload his matchlock, the three savages had adroitly succeeded in overturning his boat. The knight fell into the stream, and unfortunately his gun and his rapier, which he had drawn but laid down for a moment, while engaged with his fire-arm, both sank in the water. He had now no weapon but his dagger, with which he desperately defended himself, at the same time that he made an effort to swim to the opposite shore. The boldest and most active of the savages, however, strove to intercept him, but Gardiner, closing with him in the middle of the river, dealt him such a wound that he sank below the surface with a terrific howl, and was afterwards observed crawling, more dead than alive, upon the sandy margin of the stream.

Meanwhile, however, the other Indians had been furiously belaboring the knight with their long heavy poles, with which they inflicted many severe and benumbing contusions, and both at last succeeded in fixing their hooks in different parts of his dress. At the same moment Captain Underhill and Lieutenant Dudley plunged into the stream, and swam straight towards him.

Thus, in the middle of a deep river, beset by two savages and two armed Englishmen, and having himself no weapon but his dagger, did the desperate knight gallantly maintain the unequal combat. It was evident, however, to himself as well as to his enemies, that his time was come. Fairly harpooned, as it were, and almost dragged under water by the savages, stunned and bruised by the blows which they had showered upon him, and attacked by two fresh and vigorous enemies, escape was now impossible. A surrender, however, he did not contemplate

On the contrary, he kept himself floating and almost motionless in the water till Underhill was within his reach, then suddenly clutching him by the throat, he raised his dagger with a last and desperate effort. At that very instant, Dudley, who had approached him upon the other side, struck the weapon, by a sudden movement, from his grasp. Thus disarmed, Gardiner threw his arms around Underhill's neck, locked him in a fierce embrace, and sank with him into the stream. Here the two, clasped in each others arms, might have reposed till the last trumpet sounded, had not Dudley directed the savages to drag at Gardiner with all their strength. The harpoons held, the savages soon gained the margin of the narrow stream, and with great exertion, but in a brief space of time, succeeded in dragging the bodies of Gardiner and Underhill from the river, and laying them upon the bank.

Underhill soon recovered, but it was for a long time doubtful whether the suspended animation of the knight would be restored. After a long interval, however, during which the two unwounded savages watched for his recovery with great anxiety, fearing lest, with his departing spirit, should slip from their grasp the reward for which they had so vigilantly toiled; after a period of great uncertainty and suspense, Gardiner at length recovered his senses. His iron frame was, however, fairly prostrated, although his heart remained as stubborn and undismayed as ever.

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This tale, protracted far beyond the extent originally anticipated, now draws to its close. Sir Christopher Gardiner, after his capture, as above related, was brought, by Underhill and Dudley, to Boston, where he was kept in strict custody until despatched to England to answer for his various private and political crimes. In the same vessel with himself, was sent

prisoner, one Philip Ratcliff, originally a servant of Matthew Cradock, who had been guilty of uttering reproaches against the church of Salem, and company of the Massachusetts. For this offence, the government had cut off his ears, whipped him severely, and banished him from the territory. Gardiner, although himself a prisoner, had remonstrated with the magistrates upon the severity of this punishment, and in consequence of his exhortations, the branding, which had formed a part of the original sentence, was omitted.

Upon the arrival of Gardiner in England, he met with no punishment. The proofs of his principal offences were wanting. Maudsley, upon mature consideration of the effect of such a proceeding, and at the earnest solicitation of Esther, declined to prosecute him before the criminal tribunals, and Lady Hoveden had died some years before. Under the name of Sir Christopher Gardiner, and in his altered person, there were none in England to recognise the once celebrated Fulk de Gorges, excepting always his kinsman Sir Ferdinando.

Gardiner found that his friend Morton had been right, in supposing that Sir Ferdinando had grown lukewarm in the New England schemes. Morton, Gardiner, and Ratcliff, however, continued for some years to prefer complaints before the Lords of the Privy Council, against the government of the Massachusetts colony, in which they were sustained by Gorges. The despotic nature of their government, as illustrated in the savage punishment inflicted for a few idle words upon Ratcliff, was handled against the colony with considerable effect. A petition, exhibited by Gardiner, Gorges, Mason, and others, against both the Plymouth and the Massachusetts company, was heard before the privy council, and afterwards reported to the king. They were accused, by the petitioners, of "an intention to rebel and to cast off their allegiance, and to be wholly separate from the church of England, and that their ministers and people

continually railed against the church, state, and bishops." A general government was urged as a remedy. The colony was, however, powerful. Sir Richard Saltonstall, Mr. Humphrey, and Mr. Cradock, were heard before a committee of the council, and defended the cause of Massachusetts with such ability and earnestness, that all thought of a *quo warranto* against the charter was relinquished, and an order of council passed, expressing approval of the general conduct, both of the Massachusetts and Plymouth governments, and pledging the crown to sustain their liberties and privileges as by charter granted, with "any thing further that might tend to the good government, prosperity, and comfort of the people there of that place."

Sir Ferdinando, whose son had, in the mean time, married Lady Frances, daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, and sister to Lady Susan Humphrey and Lady Arabella Johnson, became probably less inclined to quarrel with a colony with some of whose most eminent names he was thus intimately allied. Tired with his fruitless and expensive exertions, he, after a time, contented himself with modelling and arranging his province of Maine in the most aristocratic and feudal fashion, obtaining, in 1639, a confirmed grant of the whole province with the title of Lord Palatine. The great council of Plymouth had previously (in 1635) surrendered their charter, the renewed attempt to divide the whole territory of New England into lordships, with a revocation of the Massachusetts patent, and an appointment of a general governor, having again failed.

Gardiner never returned to New England. The Lord of Merry-Mount returned in 1643, having, in the mean time, enraged the colonists by his satirical performance called the New English Canaan. He was kept in prison for a year, fined £100, which he was unable to pay, and nothing but his "old age and craziness" saved him from the whipping-post. He went to Agamenticus within the palatinate of Sir Ferdi-

nando Gorges, and "living there poor and despised, died within two years after."

Thomas Walford, the smith of Mishawum, remained but a short time in Charlestown. The same year in which our story closes, he and his wife were ordered to depart out of the limits of the patent, before the 20th October, under pain of confiscation of his goods. His offence was stated to be "contempt of authority, and confronting officers." Two years afterwards his goods were sequestered and placed in the hands of one Ancient Gennison, to satisfy some debts owed by him in the bay. He removed to Piscataqua (Portsmouth) where he became an important and respected citizen. His wife, twenty-five years afterwards, when the bloom of youth had faded, was presented by her neighbors as a witch, but, the palmy days of witch-hunting not having arrived, she was not only acquitted of the charge, but recovered damages against one who had called her by the odious name. The blacksmith lived to a good old age, and left, at his death, a competent estate to his children.

Bootefish and Rednape, soon after the lamentable decease of their compeer Peter Cakebread, emigrated to Virginia, whither the Canary Bird had flown before them. The domain of Merry-Mount was divided off in lots, and settled principally by citizens of Boston.

As for the hermit Blaxton, he soon found it impossible to exist among what seemed to him the uproarious multitude, which now thronged his sylvan peninsula. He lingered irresolutely for a year or two, as loth to leave the scenes endeared to him by his long and solitary residence, but at last he made up his mind that there was no room left for him in his much loved Shawmut, and so, taking his pilgrim's staff in hand, he wandered forth into the wilderness again.

Upon the east bank of the river, which still perpetuates his name, a pyramidal mound of alluvial earth rises to the height of

seventy feet. Near that mound, then covered with majestic forest trees, the exile again pitched his tent. His cottage he called Study Hall; the mound, which became his favorite haunt, he called Study Hill. Thither he brought his library and all his worldly goods, there he planted his orchard again, and there he lived to a good old age, and died with singular good fortune, a few weeks previously to the commencement of the bloody war of Philip, in which his house was laid in ashes, his collection of books and manuscripts destroyed, and nothing spared but his grave.

Maudsley and Esther Ludlow were united in the summer of 1631, and the happiness of their union more than atoned for the misfortunes and trials by which it had been preceded.

* * * * * * *

And now, patient reader, if haply a spark of sympathy for the heroic souls, who in sorrow and self-denial laid the foundation of this fair inheritance of ours, hath been awakened in thy bosom; or if but a single hour of thine own weariness or sadness hath been solaced by this feeble picture of a buried but an unforgotten age, my humble end will have been answered.

With a gentle pressure of thy hand, I bid thee farewell forever.

NOTES.

NOTE I.

The Preface to Beauchamp Plantagenet's work, printed in the year 1648, begins thus: —

"This Epistle and Preface shows Cato's best rules for a Plantation.

"To the right honorable and mighty Lord Edmund, by Divine Providence Lord Proprietor, Earl Palatine, Governor and Captain-Generall of the Province of New Albion * * * * and to all other the Viscounts, Barons, Baronets, Knights, Gentlemen, Merchants, Adventurers and Planters of the hopefull Company of New Albion, in all 44 undertakers and subscribers, bound by Indenture to bring and settle 3000 able, trained men in our said severall Plantations in the said Province,

"Beauchamp Plantagenet, of Belvil, in New Albion, Esquire, one of the Company, wishes all health, happinesse, and heavenly blessings," &c. &c.

NOTE II.

See Morton's New English Canaan (pp. 62, 63) for an account of the various remarkable fountains of Massachusetts.

NOTE III.

It is a pity that this picturesque chain of hills should, after bearing several very good names, have subsided at last into the anonymous. As all hills are blue, Blue Hill is no name at all.

NOTE IV.

The critic who would object to the locality of Blaxton's homestead, is informed, that, according to recent and impregnable authority, the hermit's "six acre lot" faced the Common, and was washed by the waters of the Western Cove.

NOTE V.

Morton says that his poem, "being enigmatically composed, puzzled the Separatists most pitifully to expound it." It would puzzle all the pundits in existence to expound it now. For example, thus he sets forth:

Rise Œdipeus, and if thou canst, unfold
What means Charybdis underneath the mould,
When Scilla solitary on the ground
Sitting in form of Niobe was found;
Till Amphitrite's Darling did acquaint
Grim Neptune with the tenor of her plaint
And caused him send forth Triton with the sound
Of Trumpet loud, at which the seas were found,
So full of Protean forms that the bold shore
Presented Scilla a new paramour.
I do professe by Cupid's beauteous mother
Here 's Scogan's choice for Scilla and none other,
&c. &c. &c.

NOTE VI.

See the New English Canaan.

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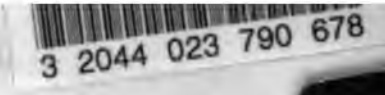

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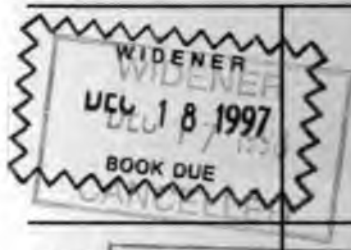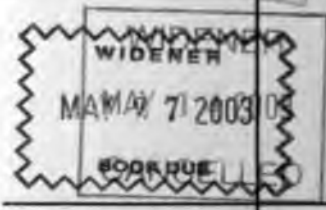
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